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A
SERIES OF LETTERS,

ON

**THE RELATION, RIGHTS, PRIVILEGES AND
DUTIES**

OF BAPTIZED CHILDREN,

BY JOHN M'FARLAND,
Pastor of the Presbyterian Church in Paris, Ky.

LEXINGTON, KY.

PRINTED BY JOSEPH G. NORWOOD,
BOOK AND JOB PRINTER, NORTH-EAST CORNER OF MAIN
AND MILL STREETS.

1828.

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ADVERTISEMENT.

To Subscribers, and to the Members of the Presbyterian Church.

THE publication of the following Letters, has been delayed sometime beyond the period contemplated. The author was fully aware of the serious responsibility attached to the publication of his views, which some consider new, and of very injurious tendency to the Church, which God has purchased with his own blood. He has now heard the main subject partially investigated in a session, and presbytery—and his general and more peculiar views discussed in the Synod of Kentucky; and no books have been neglected that were within his reach, which could afford any aid, in the examination of the important subject. It is impossible to say how the author may hereafter be treated, or his sentiments canvassed; but nothing has yet taught him to expect, a calm, scriptural REFUTATION. If such a thing, however, should appear, he will be thankful for it. Replies—personal remarks—dogmatical assertions, impeaching of motives, &c. he has experienced in some measure, but these things cannot destroy FACTS—or make the word of God of none effect—cannot in the present day screen error, or *refute* sound arguments. The publication is now made under the deliberate and mature conviction that the cause of TRUTH requires it, and that it may profit the Church of God.

Paris, Ky. March, 1828.

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LETTER 1.

INTRODUCTION.

Documents, and certain considerations which are given as reasons for agitating the subject.

DEAR SIR:

You inform me that you have heard much respecting my views and discussion of the relation, and duties of the baptized members of the church; and that the report which has gone abroad is, that I am both *novel* and erroneous on this subject. As a friend, you wish my views in writing, and advise me, in justice to myself, to publish them to the world. I have received similar communications from others, and after much prayer and reflection have concluded to comply with your advice. I hope, however, I have a higher motive than to render justice to myself. I am not my own, nor am I to seek my own, but the honour of my Master, and the interests of his kingdom. And I am not at all anxious to defend my character against false and slanderous reports, farther than is necessary for my usefulness in the gospel ministry.

I am fully aware of the force of prejudice in good and pious people; and how difficult for an author

to please the critics, who read and decide for their readers what is sufficiently correct, and elegant both in literature and religion. After publishing I expect still to be misrepresented and condemned as heretical by multitudes, who have not, and will not read for themselves, one single page. I have no sanguine anticipations of any speedy happy results. The deep, and extensive reform called for in the church respecting her youth is not to be affected by my feeble pen. I may, however, excite to such an investigation as may terminate, with other causes, under the direction of the infinitely wise and mighty Lord of all, to restore, "the kingdom to the *Saints*," and "turn the heart of the fathers to the children, and the heart of the children to the fathers."

That there were good reasons for agitating the present subject, the following documents and observations will show.

In January 1826, at a meeting of Ebenezer Presbytery, of which I am a member, the following request, by one of the brethren, was handed in, viz. The session of Millersburg church requested an answer from the presbytery to the following question. "What course should a session pursue with a baptized member of the church, who has come to years of maturity, and is habitually guilty of open immorality?" The presbytery referred said session to Book ii. of *Discipline*, chap. 1, and specially to sec. 6th.

"Resolved that all the church sessions belonging to

this presbytery be, and they hereby are enjoined to deal with baptized members under their care, according to the aforesaid chapter and sections; and that session be enquired of annually respecting their compliance, and any, and every session refusing to comply shall be considered contumacious, and delinquent, and be dealt with accordingly.”*

I considered it my duty to lay a copy of the above minute before my session, and to endeavour to influence them to comply with its requisitions. This I did. The subject was taken up, and considered at great length, at several different meetings. And in order to come to some issue, a written paper, of which the following is a copy, was introduced; viz.

“The session having taken into consideration, the situation of persons born within the pale of the visible church, to whom baptism has been administered: in pursuance to the injunctions of the late act of Ebenezer presbytery, after due and solemn deliberation had, have come to the following resolution thereupon; viz. Resolved, that the ordinance of Baptism, which by the tenets and practice of this church is administered to infants, is a recognition of that membership which infants born within the pale of the church have by their birth; and that this ordinance is equally sacred and solemn with that of the Lord’s supper—that such baptized infants, or children with their parents compose the visible church of Christ, and are full members thereof, and un-

**Minutes of Presbytery.*

der her care, with their right to the sealing ordinance of the supper, only suspended till they arrive at the years of discretion—that under the inspection and government of their parents, and the church, they ought to be brought up in the nurture and admonition of the Lord, and be taught to read and understand the word of God; to repeat the Catechism; to be taught to pray; to abhor sin—to fear God, and to obey the Lord Jesus Christ—that so soon as they arrive at the years of discretion, if they be free from scandal, are sober and steady, and are possessed of sufficient knowledge to discern “the Lords’s body” by understanding the nature and design of that ordinance, which represents his broken body and shed blood, they ought, without other requisitions to be declared by name entitled to partake of the Lord’s supper, by a sessional act, and to be thus informed, that it is their duty and their privilege to approach his table. And if they fail, or refuse to do so, they, and all others, baptized, who are scandalous in their lives, or who live in the neglect of this ordinance, and fail, or refuse to profess Christ before men, and honour Him at his table, are proper subjects of the discipline of the church; and ought first to be admonished, exhorted, reprov- ed, and entreated, with mildness and love, to desist from the error of their way, and if they will obstinately persist, to be cut off from the church.

“Resolved, that this session relying on the great Head of the church, and imploring his aid, assis-

tance and blessings in the exercise of this arduous duty, will proceed, in future, according to the foregoing course, to treat baptized children in this congregation, who are not in full communion."

These resolutions passed in the session, one member out of four, dissenting. Aware of the difficulty of carrying them out, unless unanimity in the session and an acquiescence of the congregation could be obtained; the following resolution was adopted, viz.

"Whereas the above resolutions were not unanimously adopted, Resolved, that it be deemed inexpedient, to put them into execution immediately, and that the subject be taken up by the Moderator in a series of discourses, before the congregation; and that the members of the church be requested to hear, and examine for themselves; and finally to determine whether they will support the session in the execution of the aforesaid resolutions, or not.

In compliance with the above resolution I proceeded to the task assigned me, and delivered to my congregation a course of Lectures, on the *Relation, Rights, Privileges, and Duties* of baptized children and youth. It has been stated by some that I was to blame for taking up this subject unnecessarily, to the disturbance of the peace and harmony of the church, and that I would have been much better employed in preaching the gospel. You must judge of the correctness of this charge when you have attended to the documents which I have now submitted, and to those which follow, taken from much.

higher authority. "Son of man, I have made thee a watchman unto the house of Israel, therefore hear the word, at my mouth, and give them warning from me &c.* Thou son of man, shew the house to the house of Israel, that they may be ashamed of their iniquities: and let them measure the pattern. And if they be ashamed of all they have done, shew them the form of the house, and the fashion thereof, and the goings out thereof; and the comings in thereof, and all the forms thereof, and all the ordinances thereof, and all the forms thereof, and all the laws thereof: and write it in their sight, that they may keep the whole form thereof, and all the ordinances thereof, and do them."†

This house which Ezekiel was to show to the house of Israel I have supposed, was the church of Jesus Christ, as it was to exist in New Testament times. If I am mistaken, still I think Ezekiel's duty is recorded for our example. And I would wish to say to my people, as Paul said to the Elders of the church of Ephesus. "I take you to record this day that I am free from the blood of all men. For I have not shunned to declare unto you the *whole* counsel of God." Let ministers of the gospel shun, if they will, to declare the counsel of God respecting the relation, rights, privileges and duties of those children baptized in the name of the blessed Trinity, and thus pursue what they call the peace, and harmony of the church—I cannot pursue such

*Eze. iii. 17-21. †Chap. xliii. 10-11.

a course. I hope I shall be granted the liberty of feeling my own responsibility to the Master, and of preserving my own conscience from the charge of "crying peace, peace, when there is no peace."

When you have compared the resolutions of the Paris session, respecting baptized children with the following extracts from the Confession of Faith of the Presbyterian church, you can form some opinion how far they are, or are not *novel*.

"The visible church, which is also Catholic, or universal, under the gospel, (not confined to one nation, as before, under the law) consists of all those throughout the world, that profess the true religion, *together with their children.**

"All baptized persons are members of the church, are under its care, and subject to its government and discipline: and when they have arrived at the years of discretion, they are bound to perform all the duties of church members."† "Children born within the pale of the visible church, and dedicated to God in baptism, are under the inspection and government of the church; and are to be taught to read, and repeat the catechism, the apostles creed, and the Lord's prayer. They are to be taught to pray, to abhor sin, to fear God, and to obey the Lord Jesus Christ. And when they come to years of discretion, if they be free from scandal,

* *Con. of Faith, Chap. xxv. Sec. ii. also Larger Catechism Ques. 62, and Form of Gov. Chap. ii. Sec. ii.*

† *Book of Discipline, Chap. i. Sec. 6,*

appear sober and steady, and to have sufficient knowledge to discern the Lord's body; they ought to be informed that it is their duty and their privilege to come to the Lord's supper."*

In the report of a committee appointed by the general Assembly in relation to baptized children, 1811, and published and recommended to the serious consideration of all the Presbyteries and Ministers, in 1812, there are the following declarations.

"As the children of those who profess faith in Christ, and obedience to his commands, are members of the church by virtue of the promise made to such parents, and therefore baptized, so they are necessarily, upon every principle of correct reasoning, subjects of discipline.† When admonition has failed, and a suitable time has elapsed, with a distinct understanding on the part of offending children of this issue, the church must proceed to exclude them from her communion. This exclusion is commonly known by the name of *excommunication*.

"If at that age (the age of discretion) after having all the care and attention already prescribed as necessary, they do not conform to all the institutions of Jesus Christ, there is every reason to suppose that they will commit such open sins, as will make it evident to all, that they deserve to be thus cut off; or if not, they will still deserve to be thus cut off.

**Directory for worship, Chap. ix. sec. 1.* †*Page 44.*

1. For not improving their religious education.
2. Slighting warnings administered by parents teachers, and ministers.
3. Neglecting to fulfil the vows which baptism imposes.
4. For irreligion, breaking the covenant of their God." Page 55.

Nothing more, I presume is necessary to clear the session of which I am a member, of the charge of *novelty*. It is however, proper to remark, that I had no hand in drawing up the Resolutions, which they adopted, as expressive of their sentiments, and the course they would pursue; and I do not feel myself bound to defend every sentiment, or form of expression they have exhibited. How any, Presbyterian should consider them *novel*, or erroneous, is a little marvelous.

As to the report that you have heard, that I am disposed to violate, and set aside the confession of Faith, I would remark,

1. That from the documents now before you, it appears my object to support and carry out the Confession of Faith, &c. I know some who profess to venerate that book very much, and are active in circulating the above report respecting me, who never attempted to put in practice what it declares respecting baptized children. They put me in mind of idolaters who are always professing great reverence for their idols, and are ready to resent the least disrespect to them, and yet have no real fear.

or regard for them. None more frequently put their feet upon the confession of Faith, and show that they read it but very seldom, than those, who charge me with laying it aside.

2. So long as I am in the presbyterian church I shall hold to the Confession of Faith, because I have read it, and I hope in some measure understand its nature and use. I value it not only for the doctrine it contains, but because I consider it a charter securing me, as a member of the presbyterian church, against all ecclesiastical tyranny. The following declarations, I esteem as the fundamental principles of the social compact in the presbyterian church; viz. "All church power whether exercised by the body in general, or in the way of representation, by delegated authority, is only ministerial, and declarative. That is to say, that the Holy Scriptures are the only rule of faith and manners; that no church judicature ought to pretend to make laws to bind the conscience in virtue of their own authority; and that all their decisions should be founded upon the revealed will of God.

"The authority of the Holy Scriptures for which it is to be believed and obeyed, dependeth not upon the testimony of any man, or church, but wholly upon God, (who is truth itself,) the author thereof.

"The Old Testament in Hebrew, (which was the native language of the people of God, of old) and the New Testament in Greek (which at the time of the writing of it, was most generally known to

the nations,) being immediately inspired by God, and by his singular care and providence kept pure in all ages, are therefore authentical, so as in *all controversies of religion* the church is finally to appeal unto them.

“The supreme Judge, by whom all controversies of religion are to be determined, and all decrees of councils, opinions of ancient writers, doctrines of men, and private spirits are to be examined, and in whose sentence we are to rest, can be no other but the Holy Spirit speaking in the scripture.”—*Con. Faith, Chap. i.* Any use, or application, of any other parts of this book, which are irreconcilable with these now quoted I consider inadmissible,, and anti-protestant. I do not think that I impugn, “the system of doctrine,” which the Confession of Faith contains, and in adopting it, I am bound to, “believe the scriptures of the Old and New Testament to be the word of God, the *only* infallible rule of faith and practice.” According to this rule I have proceeded in endeavouring to ascertain what are the *relations, rights, privileges* and *duties* of baptized children. And if in all points on these subjects, I should not speak the precise language, and carry out the sentiments of the Confession of Faith, as some may construe them, I am sure no independent, and consistent Presbyterians will try me by any other rule, than “the *only* infallible one.”

If any other apology than what has now been given, be required for agitating the cause of baptized children, it may be found in the following facts.

1. Although the subjects discussed are not classed among the essentials of a sinners salvation, yet they are among the essentials for the welfare and prosperity of the Church of Jesus Christ; and thus indirectly involve the eternal happiness, or misery of immortal beings.

2. The declarations in the Confession of Faith, contained in the extracts which I have given, respecting Children being members of the Church and subject to her government and discipline, are little else, practically, than a dead letter. Where is the Church session that puts them in practice? Many will grant that "baptized children are, members *in part*, but not full members." They appear unwilling to give up infant baptism, and unite with their Baptist brethren, and hence maintain that the infants of beleivers are members; but farther than baptism of what avail is their membership? How many of the Presbyterian Clergy can agree on the precise relation in which the baptized children stand to the Church, and what are their rights, privileges and duties.? Is it not a little strange that Ministers of the Gospel—that sessions, and even a Synod,* should come forward in the 19th century, and in darkness, and in difficulty, ask, "what is to be done with a member of the Church

**Synod of Kentucky. Assembly's Digest. Page 328.*

habitually guilty of open immorality," or, "what steps should the Church take with baptized youth, not in communion, but arrived at the age of maturity, should such youth prove disorderly and contumacious."

Such questions remain unanswered, year, after year, even by the General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church. From these facts, one, or other of the following inferences must be drawn, either, the king and lawgiver of the Church, has left her without law on this important point; or the law is not yet understood; or if understood, there is an awful want of faithfulness, and a sense of responsibility among us, whose duty it is to study, explain and apply the law. I come to the same conclusion from another fact, namely, that one third, and in many cases, one half of the baptized members of the Church, in the western country, are raised to fill the ranks of her enemies; and do actually disclaim her jurisdiction, mingle with the world and go down the broad road to perdition. A civil community that would raise one third of her youth, or one half, to swell the ranks of a powerful, hostile neighbouring community would, in this enlightened age, be considered either destitute of a wise and necessary organization, or else its administration must be ignorant, corrupt, and unfaithful in the extreme. It becomes us, sir, most seriously and industriously to examine this subject and ascertain, if possible, where the fault lies. According to my understand-

ing of the Scriptures, and the present state of the Church, there is an alarming measure of guilt somewhere; the guilt of all those persons, who have been recognized as members of the church, by Baptism, and having left her jurisdiction, are living in the habitual, open, and scandalous violation of God's law. In the Presbyterian Church there are vast numbers, who are guilty of the same, or similar enormous crimes, for which God said, by his prophets, to his ancient people, "shall not my soul be avenged on such a nation as this."

So long as the church will not through her rulers cast out, or discipline those transgressing members, she must bear their guilt. Such are my views, and I feel myself prepared to support them, not merely by the Confession of Faith, but by the word of God. How then can I be silent on this subject? How can I consider it a subject in which I have not an individual concern, and responsibility, and which had better be left to slumber until I am called to give in an account of my stewardship? The remarks frequently made, that I wish to be a *reformer*, and singular—that the proposed reform should be effected through the General Assembly, if necessary—and that the session of the Paris Church have assumed the Legislative powers belonging to the highest court of the Presbyterian Church, need no serious reply. For a deliberative body to originate, or take up and carry out a reform until formed by public opinion, or the success of some one indivi-

dual, would be a new thing under the Sun. Your large deliberative bodies are the last to fall in with any reform, or any new, benevolent plan. Look at the history of reformations—of the Missionary, Bible, and Tract societies. Look at the history of Sabbath schools, and the improvements made in the management of education. The fact is, I trust, much more to the inevitable effects of **INFANT, AND SABBATH SCHOOLS**, to evince and *force* upon the Church the adoption and practice of my principles, than to any arguments I can advance, or any interference of ecclesiastical bodies. These schools are making a grand experiment, which will revolutionise the Church, and bring her to know and practice the Statute book of her infinitely wise Legislator. Shall we as *ecclesiasticks* always be content to march in the rear, and leave it to *individuals*, and benevolent, voluntary Associations, to originate, and mature every good thing which is to bless the Church and the world? Are these Associations running ahead of the Bible? I believe not. But they are teaching us to understand the Bible. Let us study it, and take it for our guide, and we will be able to enlighten, and accelerate the mighty movements of those Associations; and help to usher in that glorious state of things when the Children of the Covenant shall no longer be excluded from the Church of God, or treated as little aliens, and infidels.

Yours &c.

LETTER 2.

Common ground stated—The relation in which Baptized Children stand to the Church—Membership—Scriptural view of it.

DEAR SIR:

IN discussing subjects, on which there may be difference of opinion, it is of importance to ascertain, in the first place, how far the parties may agree. It appears that if I should have opponents on the subject under consideration, I may look for them not only among my Baptist but also my Pædobaptist brethren. The latter and I, it is presumed will agree on the following general principles.

1. That the Church of God was organized in the family of Abraham—that he and his infant seed were members, in their successive generations—that the charter, or Constitution of the Church remains unaltered respecting those who were members, and the privileges they were to enjoy.

2. That the distinguishing ordinances of the New Testament are no more holy than the distinguishing ordinances of the Old Testament, and that Baptism is as holy as the Lord's Supper.

3. I hope my Pædobaptist brethren will concede to me the following principle of interpreting the word of God; viz. That when God has once

Legislated on a subject necessarily requiring his legislation, and he never alters, or repeals the act, it stands forever. For example, I give the case under consideration. The subject of membership in the Church of God, and the rights, privileges and duties of members, are subjects which necessarily require God's explicit and particular Legislation.—They are subjects that cannot be left to human wisdom, or prudence. On these subjects, or on some of them God may have legislated only once, and that in the Old Testament, and there can no altering, or repealing act be found in the New Testament—if so, then the ancient law is still in force, and as obligatory as if enacted over again by Christ, or his Apostles. It is a case in which God's positive act cannot be dispensed with, and he has shown that it is essentially necessary by ingrafting it, into the original constitution and law of the Church.

I consider it of some importance to have this principle of interpretation conceded and kept in mind. I have found it a common thing to evade direct and decisive authorities from the word of God by such replies as these. "Ah! that is from the Old Testament—it belonged to the ceremonial law—and you are to recollect we are not *Jews* but *Christians*." If such replies are always good—always in point, and always worthy the intelligent and ingenuous advocates of God's TRUTH, let us say so at once and unite with the open rejectors of the Old Testament; if we are not prepared for this, let us

not throw one of God's moral, or judicial statutes into the ceremonial and typical law, merely to foil an opponent, or shield ourselves from the sword of the spirit. If membership in the Church, and the law which points out who are members and who not, what are the privileges of members, and when, and how they are to enjoy them, be subjects of ceremonial, or typical import, let the fact be demonstrated. I am persuaded that none of my Pædobaptist brethren will seriously undertake the demonstration,* and therefore I shall consider the principle of interpretation plead for, conceded, and directly applicable to the question respecting the Membership, Rights, and Privileges of baptized Children.

Other principles might be mentioned as constituting common ground between me and my Pædobaptist brethren, and which have a direct bearing upon the subject under consideration. But as some few might object to them, they will be brought in as we proceed in the discussion.

The RELATION in which baptized children stand to the Church is the first thing to be considered. This relation has been expressed by *membership*, and such children are declared, "*Members of the Church,*" in the language which has been quoted from the *Book of Discipline*. This language, however plain, and easily understood, when used with

**To my astonishment I have found that I was mistaken, and that some of my brethren, attempted the demonstration.*

respect to a family, or civil community, appears to convey no definite idea, as used among us, with regard to baptized children." They are members, but we are told they are not "full members—they are members in part—and members not by their own act, or consent." The precise relation, then, in which they stand to the Church, is yet matter of inquiry. The Scriptures must determine this point. Your attention will be directed to them a few minutes. The Apostle treats the subject explicitly in the following quotations. "For as the body is one and hath many members, and all the members of that one body, being many, are one body, so also is Christ. For by one Spirit are we all baptized into one body, whether we be Jews or Gentiles, whether we be bond or free; and have been all made to drink into one spirit.* For as we have many members in one body, and all members have not the same office; so we being many are one body in Christ, and every one members one of another.†

"And hath put all things under his feet, and gave him to be the head over all things to the Church, which is his body, the fulness of him that filleth all in all."† "For we are members of his body, of his flesh, and of his bones."||

These declarations of the Apostle teach us incontrovertibly the following things.

1. That the Church of Jesus Christ is a com-

*1 Cor. xii. 12, 13. †Rom. xii. 4, 5.

†Eph. i. 22, 23. ||Chap. v. 30.

pletely organized body; a body which we call, corporate and federal. It must, according to the illustration, exhibit in its nature, and constitution, the variety, order, unity, and harmony of the human body.

2. The members of the Church, the body of Christ must differ in size, character, and situation, as do the members of the natural body.

3. One member, of the Church however, large or small, is as much a member as any other. No person can be partly a member of the Church and partly not. Every individual must be wholly a member or not at all. It would be perfectly ridiculous to say, that my hand is partly a member of my body, and partly not; or that my little finger is not so fully a member as my hand, or my foot.

4. The members of the Church have mutual cares and sufferings, and all have duties to perform according to their age, gifts, and standing.

Some may grant that the Church of Christ is indeed a complete body corporate, and federal—that the members may differ in size, gifts, &c. and yet they be all of mature age, or like the members of a banking, or manufacturing company, who become members by their own voluntary act and deed.—This we will find not the fact, from the following illustrations of Church membership.

The Church is represented in the Scriptures as a kingdom—Christ is the king, and the Members are his subjects. You will not require any instances as

proof of this. Now in every kingdom there are subjects of all ages. A kingdom without infants would be a new thing under the sun. There are generally in every kingdom natural born subjects, and foreigners who have become subjects by adoption, or naturalization. And it is a principle which appears founded on the nature of things, and which is universally acted on, that no one can be a subject of two distinct, independent kingdoms at the same time. And here you perceive essential points of difference between a kingdom and a banking company, or any such corporate body. A man may purchase and hold stock in ten or twenty banks, and have control in them all. And we may say that he and his funds are partly merged in one, and partly in another. But in a kingdom his whole person as a subject is merged, and owing allegiance there, he can owe it no where else. Now if the Church be correctly exhibited by a kingdom, then she embraces subjects of every age—parents and children are equally and wholly subjects. This the Scriptures enable us to make out still more conclusively. We find the Church called a city and a commonwealth, and her members, citizens—a house or family and her members children. I will call your attention particularly to Ephesians ii. 12, 19. “At that time ye were without Christ, being aliens from the Commonwealth of Israel and strangers from the Covenants of promise, having no hope and without God in the world. Now therefore ye

are no more strangers and foreigners, but fellow-citizens with the Saints and of the household of God." The members of the Church are here called citizens, in opposition to *aliens*, and foreigners; and they are called members of the household, or family of God in opposition to *strangers*, or *sojourners*. As the Apostle speaks in allusion to the city of Jerusalem or the Mount Zion, the city of the living God, and to citizenship among the Jews, we must have recourse to their laws on the subject.

It is well known that all the heathen nations were aliens from the commonwealth of Israel, and were excluded from the rights and privileges of Jerusalem. All the natural born Israelites were citizens of the commonwealth, and all born of citizens in Jerusalem were citizens of that city. Gentiles could become citizens by renouncing their idolatry, professing faith and allegiance to the God of Israel, by receiving circumcision, baptism, and offering sacrifice in the Tabernacle, or Temple. These were called proselytes of righteousness. There were others called proselytes of the gate, who professed the righteousness of the Jews, but refused to be circumcised, and to conform to all the laws of Moses. These were permitted to sojourn in the land, and to worship at the gate in the outer court of the Gentiles; but they could not purchase, and hold landed estate, nor were they considered, in any sense, citizens. They are particularly designated by the Apostle as foreigners.

These foreigners by the preaching of the Gospel and the Grace of God, became, *fellow-citizens with the Saints*—that is, they were naturalized and adopted, as members, into the Church of God; and then they were no longer *foreigners*. They were not only fellow-citizens with the Saints, but they were also “of the household of God.” The allusion is to those who literally were admitted into the Temple, the house of God, and partook of all the privileges, of that house. The Priests and Levites were, in the strictest sense, the household of God, under the law; but all God’s people are now made Kings and Priests unto God—they dwell in his house, and are accounted his children. Into this number the Ephesians were adopted. They were not members “in part,” and entitled to some privileges and debarred from others. Parents and children were equally citizens of the commonwealth of Israel, and of the city of God—they entered with their Parents into the house of God, and with their parents enjoyed the privileges of that house. The children of the believing Ephesians must also be citizens, and enter with their parents into the house, the Church of God, there to enjoy all the privileges. There is no getting clear of this, without charging the Apostle with using illustrations, of membership and privileges in the Church which are inappropriate, and calculated to lead plain, honest people astray.

Various other metaphors, and comparisons, are made use of in the Scriptures to illustrate the nature

and Constitution of the Church, and to define her members, with their privileges and duties. She is called a garden—a vineyard—a sheepfold—a flock; and in corresponding terms, her members are called *plants, trees, vines, sheep, and lambs*. All these illustrations exhibit the Church as a Society regularly organized, composed of children and grown people—all equally members and entitled to the same privileges. If these things are not clearly, and decisively established by the preceding illustrations, I have yet to learn for what they are introduced into the Sacred writings? If there be no similarity between the metaphors, and figures used, and the Church and her members, they are worse than useless—they are calculated to lead us into error, and leave us, “in endless mazes lost.” It appears from the views expressed by some, that the Church of God is *wholly* unlike every other Society upon earth, and that when he instituted her, he departed from every other of his known institutions. If this were the fact, how can we account for the incessant references in the Scriptures to those institutions? Instead of showing us the similarity between the Church and the human body, a kingdom, city, Commonwealth, &c. the Sacred writers should have been employed in showing that there is no similarity between them. It is readily granted that the Church, like every other Society, has her characteristic peculiarities, and in these she differs from all others. For example, she is of Heavenly origin—her organ-

ization, her laws and ordinances are divine—her king and head, is a mysterious and glorious personage—Emanuel God with us. Her great and specific objects, and the manner of accomplishing them are peculiar. But because she has her peculiarities, are we thence to conclude that she is in all respects unlike every other society on earth? Nothing is more absurd, and repugnant to the whole tenor of Scriptural illustration.

I have spent some time in examining the laws respecting citizens, and the alien laws, existing among the Jews, Greeks, Romans, English, and Americans, and was surprized to find that they all agree on the following points; in denying to Aliens and foreigners the right to vote in public elections—the right to hold any office under Government—and the right to hold landed property. They all agree in granting these rights to citizens—they all agree in adopting foreigners, with their children as citizens, upon certain terms, differing in some respects. They all agree in considering the children of citizens, whether natural, or adopted, as subjects before any oath of allegiance, or formal consent of the children, when come to the years of maturity. And all agree that the State or Government has certain claims upon all citizens, and can enforce these claims; or in other words, all citizens owe certain duties to the Government, of which they are members, and which affords them protection, prior to their consent, and if they refuse to perform those duties, they fall

under the appropriate penalty. Now as we have ascertained the law among the Jews, respecting aliens and citizens, and as the Apostle shows that the same law regulates membership in the Church of God, we have gotten something clear, explicit, and definite on that relation in which baptized children stand to the Church. They are members, and such a thing as members in part, was never heard of except among some modern religionists. Baptized children are members, and if members, they are entitled to all the privileges of the Church, and are bound to perform all the duties of members according to age, gifts and standing.

You may, however, say, "they are members in minority, and therefore cannot exercise their rights." I answer, that I have no objection that the law of minors should be applied to children in the Church; but I shall insist, that God shall regulate this matter in his own house. That he has done it, and that the years of discretion necessary for the performance of certain duties, and the enjoyment of certain privileges are not left to the prudence of men, to determine, will hereafter be shown. This I would now remark, that minors are under parents, tutors and governors—that from infancy they are bound to be obedient, and must enjoy the privileges of the paternal roof, particularly the family table. To deny them these, because *minors*, would be worse than savage. Were the children of those Ephesians, who became, *of the household of God*, denied

these privileges? Be not alarmed sir, I know you have a tender concern for LITTLE ONES. For them I am pleading.

Yours, Respectfully.

LETTER 3:

The Rights of Children—Right to Baptism—to a good Religious education—and to the Lord's Supper.

DEAR SIR:

IN modern times we have heard much respecting the rights of men, but we have heard little of the *rights* of God, and the rights of the children born under the Constitution of his Church. That the latter have rights as well as the former, none can deny. We have ascertained that children, born of believing parents, are members of the Church, and entitled, to all the privileges of members. I need but barely state, that they have a right to baptism, and that it is the duty of their parents, their natural guardians, to put them in possession of baptism. This ordinance has been called an *initiating* ordinance. It is so, visibly, and formally. But every adult presented for baptism, is supposed to be received previously, as a member of the Church; and baptism is therefore, an open *recogni-*

tion of membership, and the visible seal of God's visible covenant put upon the subject already acknowledged in private. It thus becomes a *distinguishing*, and a *significant* ordinance. Water in this ordinance is significant of the Holy Spirit, the sanctifier of God's people. Here we remark that it is an holy ordinance. It is the ordinance of a holy God, and is significant of the Holy Spirit, and distinguishes God's holy people from the unholy world. But its holiness is of an arbitrary, or constitutional kind. The water is not made intrinsically more holy than other water. It becomes *ecclesiastically* holy and is applied to infants, not because intrinsically holy, or born again of the Spirit, but because ecclesiastically holy. Hence there is no profanation of the ordinance when applied to them as the members of the Church. But if they were not members, and therefore not ecclesiastically holy, it would be a profanation of baptism, which is thus holy, to apply it to them.

But it may be said, as baptism is a *significant* ordinance, it implies that all who with propriety partake of it, should have understanding sufficient to perceive the nature of the things signified; and as infants have not this understanding, they are not entitled to it. To which, we Pædobaptists reply, God alone must determine this matter; and he has determined that the children of members of his Church are ecclesiastically holy, and have a right to be recognized as such, by the sealing and distin-

guishing ordinances, which he has instituted, whatever they may be. We also say, that Baptism is not merely a *significant* ordinance, but a *sealing* and *distinguishing* ordinance, and as such is of use to infants, and is applied to them with the same propriety that it is applied to grown persons. Sealed, and distinguished by it in infancy, they enjoy an important privilege, and when they advance to years of understanding, they can improve it as a *significant* ordinance. It is thus, sir, that we defend infant baptism against our Baptist brethren. And I presume that you agree with me, in admitting, that the children of Church members have a *right*, a divine right to baptism, and that parents are highly criminal in withholding baptism from them, when not providentially hindered.

The second right that children have, who are born of members of the Church, is, the right to the **LORD'S EDUCATION**. This proposition you will find at once illustrated and supported, by referring to the following passages in the Holy Scriptures. Deut. iv. 8-10. vi. 1, 9, 20, 25. xi. 18-21. xxxi. 10-13. Joshua, xxiv. 15. i. Sam. iii. 12-14. Psalm. lxxviii, 1-8. Prov. iv. 1-13. viii. 32-36, xiii. 24, xix. 18, xxii. 15, xxiii. 13, xxix. 17. Eph. vi. 1-4. Col. iii. 20-21. 1 Tim. iii. 4, 5, 12, v. 10-14.

On these declarations of God, I shall at present, make only the following general remarks.

1. The book, from which a good religious education is to be given to the children of the Church, is the Bible.

2. This education, as there delineated, consists in administering the Lord's instruction, and the Lord's government and discipline. By discipline I understand, not merely the admonitions, checks and censures which will be found presented in the Scriptures, but the proper exercise and training of all the powers of the soul. Does this education of the Lord abound in our Church?

3. The Holy Scriptures, containing the Lord's education, are deposited by him, in his Church as a legacy for her children; and her officers, and those intrusted with these children are bound to put them in possession of it.

4. When this education is faithfully, and prudently given, relying on God for his promised blessing, the general consequence is, that these children grow up in the knowledge, love and obedience of the Lord; and are prepared for the performance of all incumbent duties and the due improvement of all rights and privileges. One main object of all education, as it respects the present life, is, to prepare for action, and the exercise of rights and privileges; and need I prove that this is one main object of the Lord's education? Before any say, that it is an insufficient mean for this purpose, and that it may be given, and yet the subject remain unqualified for the enjoyment of all privileges in the Church and the performance of all incumbent duties, let the full and fair experiment be produced. I am aware that many instances are produced, as

proof that the "Lord's nurture and admonition" have been given in vain, and worse than in vain, inasmuch as the subjects often become more vicious than others. I, however, have never yet been satisfied that such is the fact. And in every instance that has come under my observation, of the children of religious parents turning out worse than the children of unbelievers, I have found that the *Lord's nurture and admonition* had *not* been given. I know, and acknowledge the innate depravity of human nature, and that children left to themselves, will remain destitute of the scriptural fruits of righteousness; and I would not say, that every one receiving the Lord's education must necessarily become a new creature, and go to Heaven; but I believe that his education as generally produces these happy effects, as the prudent, faithful and persevering labours of the husbandman produce a plentiful harvest. After he has done all, the showers of blessing must descend from the God of Heaven, or his labour is in vain; so is it with children. But may not the farmer expect these showers, and is it not in the hope of these showers, that he fences, ploughs and sows? And is not his hope generally realized? Now, Sir, the many suitable allusions to the husbandman, in elucidating the Church of God and the effects of his ordinances; and likewise matters of fact, show that the Lord's nurture and admonition properly given by parents and church officers, will have as certain and as general an effect in changing the hearts, and

saving the souls of the children committed to their care. There are some soils so hard and barren that they will produce nothing, except thistles, briars, and thorns, or they are so miry that all cultivation is impracticable; but such bear a very small proportion to the land that can be cultivated and rendered productive. And in this, the comparison is applicable to the children of the Church. And when it so happens that any of them, after many years of assiduous attention, and careful religious cultivation, according to the word of God, produce none of the fruits of righteousness, but are mere cumberers of the ground, or yield briars and thorns, the pernicious products of sin, we are told what is to be their doom, *they are to be cut down—they are to be rejected—they are nigh unto cursing, whose end is to be burned.** I shall in another letter attempt to shew more fully, the grounds of encouragement which are afforded for the religious cultivation of little children. What is now advanced may prove that the children of the Church have a right from God, their Heavenly Father, to the Lord's education; and that this education is supposed to qualify for the discharge of all incumbent duties, and the full enjoyment of all privileges, at the age of maturity. If these ends be not intended by the Lord, in prescribing his education, I would wish to be informed what purposes he had in view.

**Luke, xiii. 6-9. Heb. vi. 7, 8.*

The third right which children have, that are born, or recognized as members of the Church, is, the right to the Lord's Supper. It is at once their *right*, privilege and duty to partake of this ordinance. This follows from the fact of their being members, and from their participation of baptism and the "Lord's nurture and admonition." They have been born in the house of the Lord—they have been recognized as members of his family—they have received his education, and have arrived at the age when they are expected to act for him, the part of discreet, grateful and obedient sons and daughters. They may say, we are willing to relinquish our right to the Lord's table, and forego our privilege of participating; but can they clear themselves of the obligation of *duty*, to honour and obey their Lord and Saviour in his dying command? They have arrived at that point, when the question is, will you obey, or will you rebel—will you freely espouse me, and my cause, or will you go off, and join my enemies? Will you become *apostates*?

But suppose the children of baptism should come forward and say, we know that we are members of the church, and that we have now arrived at that age when it is our privilege and duty to celebrate the dying love of the Saviour, at his own table, and we are now about to do it, what ought the officers of the church to do? I know well that various answers may be given, and have been given to this question; and it will take some time to clear it of all the diffi-

culty under which, it at present labours. It brings me to the ground of defence, which I would take in behalf of the Paris session, and of the documents of the Presbyterian church respecting the privilege and duty of baptized children to partake of the Lord's Supper. I shall, hereafter, endeavour to put in a more satisfactory defence, but it may suffice now to state, that the Paris session believed that baptized children are members of the church and that they have a right to the Lord's education; and that when it is given, these children would be prepared to go to his table. For they say, that "baptized children are members of the church, and should be brought up in the nurture and admonition of the Lord—that they should be taught to read and understand God's word, to abhor sin, to pray, to fear God, and obey the Lord Jesus Christ." They supposed that when a child of baptism was taught all these things for twelve or fourteen years, he must have made some progress; and either be a fit subject for the Lord's table or for the kingdom of Satan. Now if in the end of the special educating years, whatever age may be fixed on, the subject of education has learned to read and understand God's word, has learned to abhor sin, to pray, to fear God, and obey the Lord Jesus Christ, I wish to know what other requisitions are necessary for his partaking of the Lord's Supper. But if he has received the Lord's education in vain, and does not pray, abhor sin, fear God and obey the Lord Jesus Christ, what is to

be done with him? The Paris session, and *the Book of Discipline*, say, he is a fit subject of discipline.—That is, admonition, exhortation, reproof and rebuke are to be administered with meekness and tenderness, and if after all these means of salvation are used for some time, (it is not said how long,) and there should be an obstinate continuance in the course of disobedience, then, the last ordinance and mean of salvation is to be resorted to, that is, cutting off or what is the same, ex-communication. Now sir, what other course do the scriptures, and common sense point out? Would you, after the process has commenced with the culprit, and before it has produced repentance, stop short, and say, that ex-communication is so abhorrent, and disgraceful a mean of salvation, that it ought not to be applied? Better let the disobedient, the hardened and refractory, lie undisturbed in the bosom of the church, and show with impunity his contempt of the Lord Jesus, on all future sacramental occasions! Why, sir, such a course is nothing short of treason to the Saviour—cruelty to the soul of the unhappy sinner, and strong evidence of an unholy heart. Many, I know, would shudder at seeing the subject of discipline, approaching the holy sacrament, without repentance and faith, but they can nevertheless retain him in the holy church of God. This must arise from very erroneous views, or a very great ignorance of God's church, and ordinances. We have already ascertained that the right to all ordinances,

and privileges arises from the fact of membership; and if a person is not too unholy to be a member of the church, he is not too unholy for the participation of all her ordinances: and if too unholy for this participation, he is too unholy for being a member. The sin, therefore, of permitting a person to continue in the church who remains too unholy, to partake of the Lord's Supper, after all due means have been used for his sanctification, for a sufficient length of time, except the last mean, which is cutting off, is attended with as much guilt, as the sin of admitting him to all holy ordinances. I hope that in due time I shall be able to show that the question of admitting, or not admitting baptized youth to the Lord's Supper, when they have arrived at a suitable age, is a question whether they shall be, or not be, *members* of the church. As members they have the right, and the privilege of partaking, and it is their duty to partake. If they be debarred, process must be entered, and reason shown that they have lost their right and privilege, by forfeiting their membership. To debar them without convicting them of crime which is a forfeiture of membership, would be grossly inconsistent, and outrageously tyrannical. You may say that granting these remarks to be correct, they do not remove, but increase the difficulty; for they reduce to this dilemma, either to admit to the Lord's Supper the unregenerate members of the church, or else institute process against them, and ex-communicate them for their unregeneracy. And whoever heard

of a church court entering a process against a man for the sin and scandal of being unregenerate? Should any commence so novel a process, the accused might put his prosecutors upon the proof of the charges and plead that they could with no propriety compel him to testify against himself. But were he to acknowledge the charges he might ask why he was ever recognised as a member of the church, he being unregenerate; and if a member, publicly recognized without regeneration, why he was now arraigned, and made to endure the pains, and penalties of a criminal, when no charge for the worse could be alledged against him? These queries, my dear sir, bring us to what may be termed, the stopping point. Sessions, Presbyteries, Synods and the general assembly, it seems, have been unable to remove, or get over this formidable difficulty. Has God or man formed this difficulty? Has it originated in the constitution and laws of the church of Jesus Christ? This cannot be supposed for a moment. If we go to Moses and the Prophets—Christ and his Apostles, this difficulty will vanish, or we will see that it is entirely of man's creation. When he attempts to legislate for God, or repeal the laws of infinite wisdom, it is not strange if he should be involved in serious difficulties. I must now leave the Paris session, and all others to carry out the Confession of Faith, or boggle, and fail in the attempt as they may; and endeavor, in my own humble way to vindicate the ways of God to man, with respect to baptized children. Yours, &c.

LETTER 4.

A more extensive view of the subject—Minority, and its different classes—General principle of unity between Parents and Children—Reason for the institution of the Passover—Its uses—That little children partook of it, proved.

DEAR SIR:

WHEN I undertook the task assigned me by the Paris session respecting baptized children, I cherished the idea that I understood the subject. Upon a re-examination I found that my knowledge had been of the second-hand and common place kind, and was far from being perfect. Serious difficulties lay in the way of carrying into practice the principles recognized in our Confession of Faith, and Book of Discipline. The inconsistency between our profession and our practice, and a conscientious concern to know and perform duty, pressed upon many. The general assembly, though applied to frequently had furnished no relief. No consistent and *practicable* course had been suggested. I was compelled to take a more extensive view of the subject, and the result I now give you.

The baptist controversy has elicited much respecting *infancy*, but I have not been able to find a single essay, or discourse that treats of minority in

all its stages, subsequent to infancy. House-hold baptism has been maintained by Pædobaptists, but when the members of a family shall be so old as to be precluded from baptism upon the profession of faith by their parents, has not yet been satisfactorily determined. Difference of opinion and practice still prevails on this point, and some have very serious difficulties. Has God furnished us with no instances on a subject of such practical importance in his church? To what age the period of *minority* shall extend he has no where precisely determined, in his word. He, however, has, by that law of nature, which regulates and perfects the human species, in their bodily, and intellectual powers; and by special revelation taught enough for all practical purposes. We know, that man comes to maturity, and enters upon the exercise of all his rights, at an earlier period, in some countries and climates, than in others; and therefore it would be irrational to expect that the God of nature, and the author of this variety, would establish *one* standard in his word, fixing the precise age when the minority should end, and manhood should commence. For the same reason we cannot expect that the various periods of minority, such as belong to *little children* and youth, should be marked out with precision by a positive, revealed law. Reason and common sense, from the indications of God in nature, are supposed adequate to fix these several periods, so as best to answer the ends of society. In the scriptures we have mi-

nors of various classes, and in some cases we have their particular ages designated, and their rights and duties exhibited. The following appellations, are familiar to all who have read the Bible. *Infants, sucklings, babes—little children, boys and girls—youth, young men, and women.* The first three of these, express, in our language, generally the same class, that is, children from the birth until weaned, and able to make use of their limbs, and the powers of speech in some measure. The term, however, which we have rendered *babe*, expresses in the original, more properly, a *little boy*, or lad, both belonging to the class subsequent to infancy. Among the Hebrews, infancy included the three first years. Children were in many instances suckled for this period of time; and so long, if sickly, their circumcision and registry in the family record, might be delayed, but no longer.* Among the Greeks children were suckled until four years of age,† and this, with them, marked the period of infancy. Children in general and infants in particular, were expressed by nouns in the neutre gender. They were considered

* *Evidences on Baptism by the Editor of Calmets Dict. of the Bible.* Letter 4, p. 20. † *Ibid.* p. 24.

(*This authors name is Taylor—a man of profound learning.*)

It is not to be understood that all children among the Jews were suckled until three years of age, and among the Greeks until four; but the extreme to which many were suckled, is put for the extreme of infancy, and to include and limit the class of infants.

as property, and accountable, as moral agents subject to public law. And we, speaking of an infant, use the neuter pronoun, *it*.

So long as infancy continues, the child, by the law of nature, and its necessary dependence on the mother, is identified with her. It lies on her breast, and receives its nourishment and protection there, and not separately at the family table. The acts, and duties, of this table belong not to it, and to enforce them would be irrational and cruel. Infants, therefore, are precluded, by the God of nature from partaking of the Lord's table, both under the Old and New Testament dispensations.

Among all nations infants, at their birth undergo a baptism, or washing. And among the Athenians the parents named them, and offered sacrifice, when seven or ten days old; and a few days after they initiated them into the Eleusinian mysteries.*

Our English Dictionaries extend infancy to seven years. And in the language of English law, infancy extends to the age of twenty-one. An heir, with us, is termed an *infant heir*, until that period. In this sense the term is never used in the holy scriptures.

The next class of minors mentioned in the scriptures is composed of those called *little ones*, and *little children*. This appellation in its primary and literal signification, is applied sometimes to a whole family of children including infants; as in Genesis,

* *Travels of Anacharsis, Chap. xxvi.*

xlvi. 5. But very frequently it is applied to express children from three to twelve years of age; and often from three to somewhere about seven. In this latter restriction we find it used frequently in the New Testament. Such were the *little ones*, that came to our Saviour, and were taken up in his arms and blessed. They were able to *come*, and yet they were *brought* and Luke calls them both *infants*, and *little children*;* by which we learn, that they were somewhere about three years of age.

As the class of *little children*, and *little ones*, included children as old as twelve years, we find the appellations of *lad-boys*, and *girls* used indefinitely, but referring more particularly to those above seven.

As *little ones* were fondled upon the *knee* and were *objects of endearment*, the appellation obtained a secondary, and figurative application, to grown persons, addressed in the familiar and endearing language of a father. In this sense our Saviour called his disciples children, and in the original, *little children*. But let it be noted that when the word is used in its literal and primary signification it is never applied above the age of twelve, in the New Testament. Every Greek scholar knows that the two words, which we have translated *little children*, *little ones* and *young children* are both in the neuter gender. The reasons have been suggested—children, thus expressed, are yet under the controul of the parents—are considered their property, and

* xviii. 15, 16.

have not arrived at years sufficient to render them amenable, as moral agents, to public law. As yet, they are under law to God, and their parents or guardians, but have not the liberty of acting for themselves, and have not formed their moral character. Hence termed, *things*, without moral character. So soon as children passed out of the class of little ones, and became subjects of public law they were no more called by this name, unless by way of endearment.

Little children among the Jews were instructed at home until five years of age—then they were sent to school where they were taught to read, and understand the five books of Moses, and then two or three years were spent in the study of the Jewish Institutes. Until thirteen, a son was called, *the little son of the law*, and after that the son of the precept. The meaning of which is, that until thirteen he is a learner of the law, and his father is accountable for his conduct, and must answer for his crimes, if guilty, but after that, having learned the law, he is considered prepared for obedience, and for attending to the divine precepts, and must answer for his crimes before the public tribunals.* Accordingly as a mark of subjection, all boys under thirteen were bound to have their heads covered, after which girls continued covered, and boys went with their heads uncovered, and their feet covered.†

**Lewis' Hebrew Republic.* Book vi. Chap 30 & 31.
Brown's Antiquities of the Jews. Vol. ii. 166, 167.
 †*Ibid.* and *Buxtorf's Synagoga Judaica.* Chap. iii.

Among the Greeks the children were not sent to school until five years of age, and some not till seven. From that till seventeen they were called *boys*. In Persia the same custom prevailed.*

The third class of minors, as we find them noticed in the holy scriptures, is called *youth*. It was composed of those from twelve years of age to eighteen. At twelve years of age the females were called young women, and were considered marriageable, but the males not until eighteen. The boys when fully twelve years old were presented by the father before ten elders or respectable men, and in their presence he resigned his charge, and declared himself no longer accountable for the conduct of his sons.† From this period they were never designated, in the Greek language, by nouns in the neuter gender, but were now considered as public moral characters; and as such, the class of *youth* are represented invariably throughout the holy scriptures. In conformity with this, our Saviour, when twelve years old, was taken up to Jerusalem, and exercised the common privilege enjoyed by Jewish youth. He left his parents, tarried behind them at Jerusalem in attendance upon the Jewish doctors, who may be considered as his new teachers. This clears him of any just charge of insubordination, to which some might, judging from the custom among us,

* *Xenophon's Cyropædia*. Book i. *Anach. Trac.* Chap. 26.

† *Lewis and Brown, as just quoted.*

consider him liable. He was now at liberty to pursue his heavenly Father's business, and was not accountable to his earthly parents.*

Among the Romans, and Persians the male children were called boys until seventeen years of age, and this period corresponded in many respects to the age of twelve among the Jews. The Toga, or manly gown was put on among the Romans, at seventeen, and then they were subject to military law, and could be called out in the service of their country.† Among the Persians they passed out of the class of boys into that of youth, at seventeen, and the period of youth continued till twenty-five.‡ Among the Greeks, they were called boys until eighteen, and then youth, or young men to twenty-five.

In England, "a male may take the oath of allegiance at twelve; at fourteen is at years of *discretion*, and therefore may consent, or disagree to marriage—may choose his guardian, and if his discretion be actually proved, may make his testament of his personal estate; at seventeen may be an executor, and at twenty-one is at his own disposal. In criminal cases an infant of the age of fourteen years may be capitally punished for any capital offence, but under the age of seven he cannot. The period be-

* *Luke* ii. 42-49.

† *Adams' Rom. Ant.* p. 389, 450. *Sec'd. Amer. Edi.*

‡ *Xenophon and Anacharsis, as before quoted.*

tween seven and fourteen is subject to much uncertainty.*

It is not necessary for our present purpose to pursue this subject farther. We have ascertained that the light and law of nature have marked out the age of infancy, and of childhood, in which children are wholly under the controul of their parents, so clearly, that little variation appears among the laws and customs respecting these classes of minors, in different countries, and nations. We have also ascertained that when childhood ends, and *youth* begins, the personal accountability of children to public law and officers commences, and that previous to this, they are only accountable to God, and their parents. The uses which are made of these facts in the scriptures, and the use which I shall endeavor to make of them, will hereafter appear. One general principle which they exhibit, and which here requires particular notice, is, that God, by the constitution and law of nature, has established a unity between parents and their children until the latter are considered able to act for themselves. They are so identified with their parents, that they cannot be rendered self-dependent and accountable. The parents stand before them as *directors, supporters and protectors*. We know that this unity, and identity may be violently destroyed. Death, or captivity, or some such calamity may separate the infant and *little one* from the parent. But the separation

* *Blackstone's Com. Book i. Chap. 17.*

is against *nature*. Has the God of nature established this order of things respecting the domestic circle, and has he violated it in any of his positive institutions revealed in the scriptures? In other words, does his revealed law in the Bible, stand in opposition to his law, as found in his natural constitution? If infidelity could have found an instance of this kind, when the diligent search was made, in the last century, it would have triumphed. But no such instance can be found. God must always be consistent with himself. His institutions in the natural world, and in his church must harmonize. Notwithstanding this principle is so clear and self evident, such are the views prevailing with respect to the relation of the children of church members, that it becomes necessary to show, at some length, that God has not by his positive institutions in the holy scriptures separated between parents and children, and marred that *unity*, which he has constituted by the law of nature.

We who believe that the church of God was organized in the family of Abraham, and that its charter, or constitution is to be found, particularly, in Genesis xvii. find parents, and their infant seed, there indentified. No separation was made, by the visible, distinguishing token of the constitution, between parents and their children. We hence argue against our baptist brethren in favour of infant baptism, and argue with no small force. For it becomes them to show that God in the New Tes-

tament has separated between parents and their children, by the visible distinguishing rite of baptism, contrary both to his constitution of nature, and his constitution with Abraham.

As the descendents of Ishmael, of Keturah, and Esau practised circumcision, and as some of the Egyptians, especially the Priests, and connections of Joseph's wife, may also have accepted it, there appears to have arisen the necessity of another distinguishing rite, when the children of Abraham through Isaac and Jacob were to be separated from all others, and exhibited as the Lord's *peculiar people*. Their redemption from the yoke of Pharaoh, and their separation from the Egyptians, afforded a very suitable occasion for the institution of this new, necessary rite. Accordingly the Passover was instituted. Exo. xii. This rite is called a feast to the Lord,* that is, it was a religious feast. It is also called a sacrifice,† and hence, like all the other sacrifices, *holy*. It was a feast upon a sacrifice. The blood of the paschal lamb was shed, and sprinkled, as atoning blood, and then the Israelites feasted upon the body. Unleavened bread and bitter herbs were used; and as wine was to be offered with all their sacrifices, it appears to have been used also in this ordinance in aftertimes.‡

The objects, or uses of the passover, were three; to *distinguish* God's people from all others—to *com-*

*Exo. xii. 14. † Verse 27.

‡Num. xv, and xxviii. Luke xxii. 17, 18.

memorate their redemption from Egypt, and to *signify typically* the Lord Jesus as the true, atoning sacrifice. The apostle says, "Christ our passover is sacrificed for us."*

It claims our attention at this time particularly as a *distinguishing* ordinance. And the question to be determined is, who partook of it, and were thus distinguished as God's peculiar people? Was it a separating line between parents and their *little ones*? Did this positive institution break in upon the family unity, established by the law of nature, and throw off the children from their affectionate parents? One might suppose that these questions admit of but one answer. But here, strange to tell, I am at issue, not merely with my Baptist, but also with my Pædobaptist brethren. All that I have conversed with deny that *little children* partook of the passover, according to its institution and observance among the Israelites. I must therefore endeavor to show that this positive ordinance did not violate God's law of nature, and that children from three years old and upwards did partake of it with their parents.

All the congregation were to kill the lamb; and they were to eat it by *families*; that is, each family was to kill and eat a lamb, and if one family was too small then two were to unite together. Now it must be granted that there were many families, in Israel, in which all the members, except the par-

* 1 Cor. v. 7.

ents were under twelve years of age. In such instances did the parents go from their houses and leave their *little ones*, there, and unite with families where all were above twelve years—where there were no *little ones*! Verily, this would have been so repugnant to nature, that it would have required a more explicit and imperious command than will be found in the twelfth of Exodus. There is nothing said there, of separating families—of leaving houses and little children exposed to the destroying angel, without the blood of sprinkling. There are no directions to the parents to kill, and eat, with their grown sons and daughters, but to drive back their *little ones*. All the members of the families, except the infants, identified with their mothers, had usually took their stand, or seat with their parents around the family table. This table on the passover night became the table of the Lord—there was no provision in the house but the unleavened bread, and the body of the paschal lamb*—they are spread upon the Lord's Table—the *Father* of mercies and the God of all comfort presides—he says to the family come and eat—they all young and old come forward—and who now will make the separation? Who will step forward and say, the Father, whose this table is, meant by the family only the parents and those who have arrived at mature age—the years of discretion? Why Sir, we must look for such bold, and heaven daring expositors somewhere else than

* Verse 15.

among the simple hearted Israelites, or those unfettered by "the doctrines and commandments of men." All such exposition appears to be precluded by the maker of the feast. "According to the number of the *souls*, every man according to his eating, shall make your count for the lamb." The number of *souls* in the house were to be counted—but this in some instances, would include infants; true—and can infants eat the flesh of the lamb, and the unleavened bread and bitter herbs? No, and therefore some restriction must be made with respect to the number of *souls*; and this restriction is added; "every man according to his eating"—that is, according to his caters. Every man knew how many of his family eat at the family table, and he knew how much they usually eat at an ordinary meal; and thus he was to make his calculation with respect to the passover. How any person, from such plain definite language, could take up the idea that little children, weaned from the breast and partaking of the family table, were debarred from partaking of the passover, is truly marvellous.

2. If little children did not partake of the passover, how did it operate as a *distinguishing* ordinance? The face of the history shows that it was intended, and did actually separate between the *families* of the Israelites and Egyptians—between the circumcised, and the uncircumcised. It is said explicitly, that no stranger should eat of it. And in aftertimes if any stranger would eat of it, all his males were

first to be circumcised. Now if all his males who eat at his table were not to eat of the passover, and if even the infant on the mother's breast, and identified with her, was not to be present, why must they all be circumcised? In one ordinance they and their parents are recognised and distinguished as the Lord's people; in the other *some* of them are recognised, and distinguished as his, and the others are disowned and put out with the uncircumcised! Thus the passover would operate upon the family of the stranger coming in among God's people, and thus it would operate upon the families of Israel. And instead of having the line drawn between the Egyptians and Israelites, the circumcised and uncircumcised, it runs through the families of the latter, and separates all the *little ones* from the parents, and their elder brothers and sisters, and throws them among the former!

3. The demand which God made by Moses and Aaron upon Pharaoh, was, "let my people go that they may hold a feast unto me in the wilderness." And this feast is called, "a sacrifice unto the Lord."* When Pharaoh was sorely pressed with the judgments of God, he enquired of Moses and Aaron, who should go to hold this feast? They replied, "we will go with our YOUNG, and with our old, with our sons and with our daughters, with our flocks and with our herds, will we go: for we must hold a feast unto the Lord. And he said unto them,

* *Exo.* v. 1-3 and x. 9, 25.

let the Lord do so with you as I will let you go and your *little ones*.”* The reason why the flocks and herds must go, was afterwards explained—they were necessary for sacrifice. But where was the necessity of the *little ones* going if they were not to partake of the Lord’s feast, and sacrifice? Whether the passover was particularly meant by this feast or not, does not affect my argument. The passover was a feast, and a sacrifice unto the Lord, or a feast upon a sacrifice, and therefore required the same qualifications in those who partook that any other feast upon a sacrifice did, and no objections can be produced against *little ones*, partaking of the passover, that will not be equally strong against their partaking of any feast upon a sacrifice to the Lord. Pharaoh wished, as a cruel monster, to violate the law of nature and separate them from their parents; but Moses and Aaron said, “we hold a feast unto the Lord,” therefore the *little ones* must accompany us—we cannot appear at the feast of the Lord without them. He might have replied with the logic of modern times and said, “what is the use of their attendance—if it is a feast to the Lord it is holy, and they will profane it—if it is a sacrifice, it is significant, and requires the exercise of mature understandings, which they have not, and therefore they are precluded.”

Will any one say that the *little ones* were to go to be mere spectators; and that when their parents

*Exo. x. 10.

feasted upon the sacrifice of the Lord at his table, they were pushed off to eat something else by themselves? This is too grossly absurd to be seriously urged by any rational man. The feast of the passover was one of the feasts celebrated in the wilderness;* and the law of its institution stands thus, "seven days shall there be no leaven found in your houses: for whosoever eateth that which is leavened, even that SOUL shall be cut off from the congregation of Israel, whether he be a stranger or born in the land. Ye shall eat nothing leavened: in all your habitations *shall ye eat unleavened bread.*"† Here every soul was shut up to a participation in this feast, or to cutting off and starvation. It may be said that the little children partook of the feast of the passover, but not of the passover itself, or of the flesh of the lamb. This is a distinction worthy a Jesuistical casuist. Upon the same principle, and with as good reason, there may a distinction be made between the bread and the wine in the Lord's Supper; and the one be made common for children and the other sacred for the adult. But on the night that the passover was first celebrated, when all the family that could walk, and for want of wagons, or carriages, must walk, and had a hard days march before them, were drawn up around the paschal table, with their loins girded, their shoes on their feet, and their staves in their hand, and required to eat in haste, did not the little ones need the

*Num. ix.

†Exo. xii. 19.

whole supper as much as the older and more robust? How could they be put off with the unleavened bread and bitter herbs? Admit that a thing so unnatural and unfeeling could be commanded, and attempted, could it be carried out? Could the little children be made to submit to such a regulation? I believe it would be utterly impracticable in any family with which I have been acquainted. If these little ones were to partake of the feast of the Lord, the feast of the passover, they inevitably partook of the paschal lamb.

4. In closing my remarks upon the proof in Exo. xii. in favour of little children partaking of the passover, I would simply notice the fact, that they were contemplated as being present in aftertimes, and enquiring of their parents the nature of the ordinance. How soon children would take notice of so singular and unusual a meal, and make enquiries respecting it, every one may easily determine. Children are very inquisitive and discerning at three years of age. Why were they to be present and to have the ordinance explained to them, if they were not to partake? So far, we have found nothing in the positive constitutions of God that violates his law of nature and breaks up the family unity which he has established.

Yours, &c.

LETTER 5.

The subject continued—Argument from the Congregation of the Lord—Elkanah and his family—Passover observed by King Josiah—Jewish practice—Certain propositions considered proved.

DEAR SIR:

THE testimony in favor of little children partaking of the passover which was considered in the last letter is so clear and decisive to my mind that some apology seems necessary for adducing more. The subject is important, and if established will have a decisive bearing on the rights and duties of baptized children. The evidence, which to my mind is conclusive may not be so to the mind of another, especially on a point where strong prejudices and a favorite system must be relinquished. In such cases I am aware that God must speak once, yea twice, yea many times, before the mind is carried. It may not be unnecessary therefore to consider the additional and corroborating testimony furnished by the scriptures and the Jewish writings.

I find that an incorrect notion prevails respecting the *Congregation of the Lord*, and which alone in times subsequent to its first institution was to partake of the passover. This congregation did

not include all the *nation* of Israel, as is generally supposed. There went up out of Egypt, a mixed multitude.* Many strangers, and uncircumcised attached themselves to the Israelites. They sojourned among them—and in subsequent times we find the stranger and the children of Belial, and many unclean persons belonging to, and living in the nation. These however did not belong to the *Congregation of the Lord*—they were not permitted even to enter it. All ex-communicated persons whether for a shorter or longer period were excluded from this congregation—they however continued subjects of the nation, unless in some cases when capitally punished. This congregation was selected out of the nation, and when actually formed there was always a visible and distinct separation made. Such from among the heathen as renounced idolatry, professed allegiance to the God of Israel, and were circumcised, became members of this congregation.† But the illegitimate Israelites, and the Ammonites and Moabites could not enter it until the tenth generation, but the Edomite and Egyptian could enter in the third.‡ The unclean who were put out of this congregation for a time, if they refused to attend to the prescribed rites of cleansing, were to be cut off entirely.||

The manner of forming this congregation from

* *Exo.* xii. 38. † *Exo.* xii. 47, 49. *Num.* xv, 15.

‡ *Deut.* xxiii. 2, 3. *Neh.* xiii. 1, 2, 3.

|| *Lev.* xiv. *Num.* xix. 20.

time to time shows that it did not include the Nation. The Tabernacle was built in the wilderness for the public, and special worship of God. In it was the holy place where the sacrifices were offered, and the most holy, where was the ark of the covenant, and where the high priest alone entered once a year, to make atonement before God for himself and the Congregation. Before the door of the Tabernacle was a large court, where the congregation met for worship, offering their sacrifices, and partaking of their holy things. When they appeared in this court, they are said to present themselves before the Lord. The Tabernacle was pitched far off without the camp. The court before it, and all its apartments were holy. The stranger that approached it was to be put to death,* but the Congregation of the Lord assembled in the court, and a visible separation from the camp was made, every time they appeared before the Lord. The camp included the nation, the court of the Tabernacle included exclusively *the Congregation of the Lord*.

The Temple built by Solomon, had, like the Tabernacle, three apartments, the most holy place, the holy, and the court of Israel. In the second temple there were added two other courts, called the court of the Women and the court of the Gentiles. The temple with all its courts was called the house of God, and was holy, but not equally so

**Num.* i. 51 and iii-10, 38, and xiii. 4-7.

In all its parts. The court of the Gentiles was more holy than Jerusalem—the court of the women, and of Israel was more holy than the court of the Gentiles, and the court of the priests, called the holy place, was more holy than the court of Israel, and the inner court, where was the ark of the covenant, was *the holiest of all*.* All who properly composed the congregation of the Lord were privileged with entering the court of Israel, and there presenting themselves before the Lord and partaking of his ordinances, and uniting in all the acts of worship belonging to that court. Watchmen and porters were placed at the eastern gate, the gate of entrance, to prevent the stranger, the uncircumcised, and unclean from profaning the house of God.

It is thus very evident that Israel, as a nation, did not compose, or constitute the Congregation of the Lord, which formed, from time to time, and often daily in the tabernacle, and afterwards in the temple.

One thing respecting this congregation, the court, where it assembled, and the ordinances there enjoyed, is worthy of particular notice, viz. there was no difference between them with respect to *holiness*. If a person was holy enough to be a member of the congregation, he was sufficiently holy to enter the court of the tabernacle, and there appear before God in all ordinances and worship prescribed for that court. Actual membership in the congrega-

**Heb. ix. 3. Brown's Ant. Jews. vol. i. 201, 202.*

tion ensured a participation, in the court of the tabernacle, of all its privileges. Hence we have a profanation of God's house and sanctuary complained of more frequently than a profanation of his ordinances. Of this you may satisfy yourself by the use of a concordance, and a reference to the texts, at the bottom of the page.* The watchmen and officers of God's house were not left to consider any as sufficiently holy for membership in the Lord's congregation, and at the same time too unholy to enter his courts; or as holy enough to enter his courts, and too unholy to partake of the holy things there to be enjoyed.

These statements now made and the proof referred to in support of them, I shall consider correct and valid, not liable to be even controverted.

Our enquiry now shall be, *did little children belong to the congregation of the Lord, and did they enter with their parents into the court of the tabernacle and temple, and there appear before him?* The following texts of scripture may determine this question. "Thrice in the year shall all your men children appear before the Lord God, the God of Israel.† And Jehoshaphat stood in the congregation of Judah and Jerusalem, in the house of the Lord, before the new court. And all Judah stood before the Lord, with their *little ones*, their wives and their children."‡

* *Lev.* xix, 30, and 21. xii, 23, and 22. ix, 15. *Num.* i. 3, 10, 38, and 18. vii. 32, and 19, 20. 2 *Chron.* xxxvi. 14. *Eze.* xxii. 26, and xxiii. 38, & xliv. 7. *Zeph.* iii. 4. *Zech.* xiv. 21. *Mat.* xxi. 12, 13. *Acts.* 21. 28. † *Exo.* xxxiv. 23. ‡ 2. *Chron.* xx. 5, 13.

Here *little ones*, and children are both mentioned. The free will offerings of God, the oblations of the Lord, and the most holy things that were distributed under the command of Hezekiah to the priests, and Levites, were distributed, "as well to the great as to the *small*; beside their genealogy of males from **THREE YEARS** old and upward, even unto *every one* that ENTERETH INTO THE HOUSE of the Lord. And to the genealogy of all their *little ones*, their wives, and their sons and their daughters through all the congregation.*

Now when Ezra had prayed, and when he had confessed weeping, and casting himself down before the house of God, (i. e. in the court of Israel) there assembled unto him out of Israel a very great congregation of men, and women and *children*.† Blow the trumpet in Zion, sanctify a fast, call a solemn assembly. Gather the people, sanctify the congregation, assemble the elders, gather the children and and those that suck the breasts."‡ The little children, the babes and sucklings, hailed Jesus in the temple, and there they sung his praises.¶ These quotations are sufficient to show that little children belonged to the congregation of the Lord, and as members of that congregation entered into the house of God, and there appeared before him. If so, they must have partook of the holy things—the sacrifices there offered, and feasted on by their parents. The oblations and sacrifices offered in the

*2 Chron. xxxi. 14–20.

†Ezra xii. 1.

‡Joel ii. 15–16.

¶Mat. xxi. 15, 16.

house of God, were divided into the most holy, eaten by the priests—the holy eaten by the Levites, and common people in the tabernacle, or temple, and the less holy, which were taken home, and eaten in private families.* Accordingly the distribution was made, 2 Chron. 31 and made to the children of three years old and upward. The children of the priests partook with their parents—the children of the Levites with their parents, &c. This was according to the law given by Moses, as you may see by consulting, Lev. vi. 16, 17. and xxii. 5–16. Num. xviii. 8–32. Deut. xii. 7. and xiv. 24–26. Will any one say that the sacrifice of the passover is not particularly mentioned in the feasts and sacrifices of which the children, the little children partook with their parents, and therefore this proof is inconclusive? I answer, that the objection is without force, unless it be shown that the passover was not a sacrifice, or that there was something in it singular, and which made it improper for little ones.

Again, the passover was one of the three feasts at which all the males were to appear annually, before the Lord. For what did they come up to Jerusalem, and how could they appear before the Lord in this ordinance unless they partook with their parents? Would the males, who had arrived at maturity have complied with the requisition, if they had merely presented themselves in the court of the house, and not eaten of the Lamb? But law is express on this point.† The history of Elkanah,

* *Brown's Ant. Jews.* vol. 1, 340.

† *Deut.* xii. 5–18. and xiv. 22–26.

the father of Samuel, the prophet, affords something like a practical comment on the observance of the passover among the Israelites. "He had two wives; the name of the one was Hannah, and the name of the other Peninnah: and Peninnah had children but Hannah had no children. And this man went up out of his city yearly to worship, and to sacrifice unto the Lord of Hosts in Shiloh. And the two sons of Eli, Hophni and Phinehas, the priests of the Lord were there. And when the time was that Elkanah offered, he gave to Peninnah his wife, and to all her sons and daughters portions: but unto Hannah he gave a worthy portion."^{*} Again, after samuel was born, it is said, "the man Elkanah and all his house, (that is all his family) went up to offer unto the Lord the yearly sacrifice and his vow."[†] And when Samuel was weaned, that is, was somewhere about three years old, he was taken up and admitted *into* the tabernacle, there to stay and minister.

Upon this part of the same history I make the following remarks.

1. There must have been little ones in the family of Elkanah. All his sons and daughters by Peninnah could not have been grown at the birth of Samuel.

2. As all his family went with him to offer sacrifice, they all must have partook of it with him. And it is said explicitly that he gave them portions, or parts of the offering.

* 1 Sam. i. 2-5.

† Verse 21.

3. When Samuel was about three years old, he went up with all the family as usual, and the annual sacrifice was offered and Elkanah gave portions, as usual, to all his sons and daughters. Was little Samuel included, or excluded?

4. Unless it can be proved that one of the three annual festivals observed by the Israelites was more holy than another; and that the sacrifice of the passover was so different from the sacrifice in the other festivals, that little children might partake of the latter, but necessarily be debarred from the former, it will not affect my argument to deny that this annual sacrifice attended on by Elkanah and all his family, was the passover. I am constrained to take it as a fact, that must be conceded, that if little children from three years old and upward partook of the sacrifice to the Lord in one of the three annual festivals, they partook, with the same propriety, and under the same law, of the sacrifice in all of them. But why may we not understand by the yearly sacrifice of Elkanah each of the three annual festivals instituted by God, for the observance of all Israel? If Elkanah was a conscientious observer of one, why not of all? There is little doubt in my mind that he did observe all that the children of Israel then observed; but there are certain circumstances in the history of Elkanah's yearly sacrifice that show that it was none other than the sacrifice of the passover. All the men children—all the males, were to appear thrice in the

year before the Lord; but there was no special law requiring the attendance of the females. But the law respecting the passover required that, "the whole assembly of the congregation of Israel shall kill it in the evening." But they were to kill it by their families, a lamb for a family.* This included the females. And accordingly the Jews understood the law respecting the passover and the two other annual festivals. They said that the women were bound as well as the men to attend the passover.† Now Elkanah and all his family went up to offer unto the Lord the yearly sacrifice—his two wives and his sons and his daughters; and even little Samuel took his portion along with them, when not more than three years of age. It may be said that on this occasion, only three bullocks were taken along for sacrifice, and no mention made of a Lamb for the passover, and that Samuel, and the other minors of the family partook only of the sacrifices which accompanied the passover. This is the Jesuitical distinction already exploded. It is no of force; for these sacrifices were eaten in the courts of the Lord's house, but the body of the paschal lamb was carried home, or to the private lodgings, and eaten there, and thus was the less holy sacrifice. The paschal lamb must be provided on the tenth day of the month, and kept up until the fourteenth; and hence when the passover was to be celebrated in the one place which the Lord should choose,

**Exo.* xii. 3, 6. †*Lewis' Heb. Rep.* Book iv. Chap. 3.

lambs were provided, and kept in readiness by the priests and Levites, and sold to the people, as they needed.* When the parents of Samuel, therefore, went up to observe the passover at Shiloh, we are not to expect to find the paschal lamb mentioned with the three bullocks for sacrifice. According to the law, Samuel should have been presented before the Lord with sacrifice shortly after his birth.† It was, however, delayed, because he was to be dedicated entirely, and forever to the Lord, to abide and minister in his house. His mother chose the passover occasion, to make the necessary sacrifices of redemption, and special dedication. Hence *three* bullocks were taken up on this occasion.

The proof and argument here advanced to show that the annual sacrifice on which Elkanah and all his family attended was the passover, are strongly supported by the practice of Joseph and Mary, the parents of Jesus. It is said, "his parents went to Jerusalem every year at the feast of the passover. And when he was twelve years old they went up to Jerusalem, after the custom of the feast."‖ Joseph might have attended the other annual festivals, by himself, but his wife attended with him at the passover, as was the custom from the days of Elkanah.

You must bear with me whilst I produce some

**Lewis' Heb. Rep.* Book iv. Chap. 3. *Deut* xiv. 24-26. †*Luke* ii. 22-24. ‖ *Luke* ii. 41, 42.

scriptural proof in favor of little children partaking of the passover. We have seen from 2 Chonicles 31, that the most holy things, and the free-will offering and oblations were distributed to the males from three years old and upwards—to all their little ones, their wives and their sons and their daughters. It may be argued that the distribution was made only to the *little ones* of the priests and levites. Should this be admitted nothing is gained. For if the little ones of the priests and levites eat of the same holy things that the parents eat, then the little ones of the common people eat of the same holy things that their parents did. That they did eat of the passover, with their parents, observed by Josiah, as recorded in the 35th Chapter, there can be no doubt. On this occasion, “Josiah gave to the people, of the flock, lambs and kids, all for the PASSOVER OFFERINGS, for all that were present to the number of thirty thousand, and three thousand bullocks, these were of the King’s substance.”* The priests, Levites and people were supplied in like manner by the princes. The distribution was made for all that were present—were no *families* present? no little ones? If there were, would not the distribution be made as it was made under Hezekiah a few years before, when all the little ones, from three years old, partook? The paschal lambs and kids, as well as the other victims, are, in this instance, specified. It is said that no

*Verse 7.

passover, such as this kept by Josiah, had been kept in Israel since the days of Samuel. Did its singularity, and glory consist in this, that it was not celebrated by *families*—that all little ones were excluded?

If the proof now advanced from the word of God does not satisfy you and every candid man, that little children, from three years of age, partook of the passover, I shall despair of producing conviction on any subject, by mere scriptural authority.

There appears no necessity, after such an array of scriptural proof, to have recourse to Jewish authorities, or Jewish practice in favour of little children partaking of the passover. It may however be satisfactory to know what that authority and practice were. Josephus says, all the people celebrated the passover having purified themselves with their wives and their children.* Buxtorf says, the cup of wine was administered to every one, the younger as well as the older, and even to infants.† Lewis, in his *Antiquities of the Hebrew republic*, thus writes. “Ordinarily were men, women and children, masters and servants (if circumcised) entertained together,” at the passover. “There were two, or three cakes of unleavened bread provided, and the eating of this bread they thought so absolutely necessary, that it was to be offered to infants, and sick persons; and if they were not able to eat it dry, they had it soft and macerated in something li-

* *Ant.* xi. iv. 3.

† *Synagoga Judaica Chap.* xiii.

quid, that so they might eat of it, at the least to the quantity of an olive.”*

Those who were excused from attending the three feasts of the *passover*, *pentecost* and *tabernacles* were the following; the deaf, the dumb, the foolish, the lame, the unclean, and the uncircumcised, those that were very old, the sick, tender, and unable to travel on foot, and infants till they were able to walk up to the mountain of the house holding their fathers by the hand.†

It was the custom of the children, or some others to enquire into the nature of the supper, and if there were none who enquired, the president explained. * * * * * It generally happened that there were children, whom he kindly addressed, according to their capacity. If *very young* he would say, children, we were all servants like this maid servant or this man servant that waiteth, and on this night, many years ago, the Lord redeemed us and brought us to liberty. But to children of greater capacity, and the rest of the company he would particularly relate the wonders done in Egypt, &c.”‡

The modern Jews observe the *passover* in the following manner. “The matron of the family spreads the table; sets upon it two unleavened cakes,

*Book iv. Chap. 3. *This was attributing a superstitious virtue to the bread and wine.*—EDITOR.

†*Lewis. Book iv. Chap. 3. Brown's Ant. Jews. Vol. ii. 168.* ‡*Brown's Ant. of the Jews. First Amer. Edi. vol. i. p. 412.*

and two pieces of Lamb, viz. a shoulder boiled, and a shoulder roasted, to which she adds bitter herbs, &c. * * * * The table being furnished, the father of the family sits with his *children* and servants, because his ancestors were once slaves in Egypt; takes of the bitter herbs, dips them in the mustard, distributes the remainder among the rest; divides also the pieces of the lamb, &c.”*

The following extract from *Lewis* appears to hold forth the idea that children did not partake of the passover until they were thirteen years of age. “During the time the boy is learning the *five Books*, he is called *the son of the law*, and when he is thirteen years old, he is styled *the son of the precept*; for now the youth receives the passover, and is purified; until he comes to be a son of the precept, the Father stands chargeable for all his miscarriages, but at thirteen years old the lad being supposed to be able to discern virtue from vice, and good from evil, he is bound to answer for his own faults.”† Does *Lewis* here contradict what he had before asserted? By no means. Until the child arrived at thirteen it was his *privilege* to partake of the passover, but it lay with his parents whether he partook or not. If they lived so far from Jerusalem that they could not take up their *little ones*, they were excused, and their little ones were not accountable to the public officers. At thirteen they were accountable, and

* *Brown's Ant. of the Jews*. First Amer. Edi. vol. i. p. 428. † Book vi. Chap. 39.

bound to partake of the passover. Before it was their *privilege*; and the *duty* of the father to put them in the enjoyment of their privilege, if no natural, or legal, obstacle rendered it impracticable—but now, it was at once their *privilege* and their *duty*; and if they refused to enjoy their privilege and perform their duty they were liable to be cut off by the judges.* This was the law respecting all that were accountable to the rulers for their conduct, and would not partake of the passover. When a man was unclean, or on a journey so that he was prevented observing the passover on the fourteenth day of the first month, there was a second passover for such on the fourteenth day of the second month; and he who was clean and not on a journey, and would not keep the passover was to be cut off.† If unclean, it appears they had a month to attend to the duty of cleansing, but no longer. They could not plead, that the time was too short—that they could not cleanse themselves, and that God must do it for them; and that until he did it for them, excommunication must be delayed.‡

The following propositions may now be considered as established.

**Lewis as before cited.* †*Num. ix. 10–14.*

‡*Until the preceding evidence was submitted to the Kentucky Synod, I found none who would grant that little children partook of the passover, and some said if it could be proved, their right to the Lord's Supper would be established beyond all refutation. This is my apology for spending so much time on this point.*

1. Infancy among the Jews, and according to the law of God, natural and revealed, included three years from the birth; and that children of this period, were identified with the mother, and that no provision was made for them in the feasts upon the sacrifices, offered to the Lord.

2. When three years old there was provision made for them—they partook of the passover with their parents; and of the other holy things, as their *privilege*, until thirteen years of age and then it became their indispensable *duty*.

3. Those who were unprepared to partake of the passover according to the law, and did not become prepared in a month, were excommunicated.

4. The religious, and positive institutions of God in the Old Testament, particularly the passover, did not violate the law of nature establishing the family unity, by which children, until capable of acting for themselves, are identified with their parents, and live, and enjoy privileges through them.

Whether the laws of God, natural and revealed, contained in the above propositions have been repealed, will be a question for future consideration.

Yours, &c.

LETTER 6.

The Law of the Passover not annulled—but in force with respect to the Lord's Supper—proved from the Scriptures; and that little children did partake of this ordinance under the administration of the Apostles.

DEAR SIR:

THE Pædobaptists generally maintain that baptism has come in the room of circumcision, and the Lord's Supper in the room of the passover.* They also contend that the law of church membership, by which infants were formerly members has remained unaltered. If this be so, a question arises which we must endeavor to determine; viz. Was the law of the passover annulled, and has a new law been introduced respecting the Lord's Table by which other terms of admission are required, and little children are excluded, contrary to the original law of nature, tenderly regarded in the Old Testament? You must not think it strange, and heretical if I take the negative of this question, and endeavour to support it. If I should have opponents, who take the affirmative, I would request them, to

**This, to my great astonishment was denied in the Synod of Kentucky at its last meeting, by two champions for the faith!*

show explicitly that the law of the passover was repealed; and that the privilege, which *little children* enjoyed of partaking of the passover was taken from them by the Saviour, or his Apostles, and that he debarred them from the *Supper*, which he instituted in its place. In other words they must show from the New Testament, that the covenant with Abraham, the original charter of the church was altered; and that new terms of membership and of enjoying *distinguishing* privileges were introduced. When they have done this and driven me from my position, how will they face the Baptists, and maintain the membership and baptism of infants? With this hard task, and in this awkward situation I might safely leave all my Pædobaptist opponents, and spare myself the trouble of any further argument. But to satisfy some, and to remove the prejudice, which has been supported by the practice of ages, it becomes necessary for me to endeavor to prove the *negative*—to prove that the law of the passover, is the law of the Lord's supper—to prove that the *little* children of baptism are as highly privileged under the Saviour, as the little children of circumcision were under Moses; and that as the latter partook of the passover the former have the right to partake of the Lord's Supper.

We have been in the habit of arguing thus against our Baptist brethren. "The membership of children, in the church, under the Old Testament, and their participation of circumcision were privi-

leges, which parents held so dear, and precious, that they never would relinquish them quietly, without some equivalent. But not a syllable of complaint can be found in the New Testament, against our Saviour, either by friend or foe, for his interfering with the law, and custom, and taking away these privileges. The obvious inference is, that he left the membership and privileges of children as they were. Now if it was the privilege of little children to partake of the passover, and if they did partake of it, as often as it was in the power of their parents, is not the argument against the Baptists, as good and valid in my favour, as in favour of infant baptism? Will it not as effectually secure the Lord's Supper, which has come in the room of the passover,* to little children, as it will secure infant baptism, which has come in the room of circumcision? Jewish parents would relinquish the one privilege, without murmuring just as soon as the other; and I do consider this argument in favour of infant baptism, and the communion of little children in the Lord's Supper, strong and unanswerable. So grievous must it have been to Jewish parents, to have their little ones shut out of the house of God, and debarred from his table, where they had so long sat and feasted together, that they must have been prepared for it both by prophecy, and by John

**As this has been denied recently, by Presbyterians of no inconsiderable standing, it will be supported with proof, in a subsequent letter.*

the Baptist, or they never would have silently acquiesced; and those who remained the envious, and malignant opposers of Jesus Christ, and never failed to lay hold of every thing which could prejudice the people against him and justify their own conduct, would certainly not have been silent, when they found him, contrary to the law of nature and of Moses—the prejudices and tender feelings of parents, and every thing known among men, clearing the house of God of little children, and driving them away from the family table. There are no complaints, however, but entire silence, respecting this offence in our Saviour, throughout his history by the Evangelists; and his Apostles stand as free of charge, as he does, on this point. This is strong presumptive proof that children occupied the same standing under Jesus and his Apostles and enjoyed substantially the same privileges, which they did under the Abrahamic and Mosaic dispensation. Did prophecy declare so clearly, and decidedly, that children should lose the standing and privileges which they enjoyed under Moses, when Messiah came; and did John the Baptist so perfectly prepare the Jewish nation to acquiesce in the bereavement, that no one murmured, or made any complaint when it was inflicted? You will excuse me, Sir, for not attempting to prove this, and will be as well satisfied, if I prove the contrary.

First, what says the spirit of Prophecy? That in Abraham, “all the FAMILIES of the earth

should be blessed.”* As parents and children were included in the covenant which the Lord commanded Moses in the Land of Moab, so children are to be included with them in their final restoration from all nations.† That restoration is yet future, and when restored, their religious ordinances, and worship will be christian, not Jewish, and their children will be with them. The Messiah, among other things was not to forget the little ones. “He shall feed his flock like a shepherd; he shall gather the *lambs* with his arm and carry them in his bosom, for they are the seed of the blessed of the Lord and their *offspring* with them.”‡ “Their children also shall be as aforetime and their congregation shall be established before me, and I will punish all that oppress them.”¶ And they shall dwell in the land that I have given unto Jacob my servant, wherein your fathers have dwelt; and they shall dwell therein, even they and their *children*, and their *children’s children* forever.§ And it shall come to pass that ye shall divide it by lot for an inheritance unto you, and the strangers that sojourn among you, which shall beget children among you; and they shall be unto you as born in the country among the children of Israel.”|| Behold I will send you Elijah the prophet before the coming of the great and dreadful day of the Lord: and he shall turn the heart of

* Gen. xii. 3. † Deut. xxix. 1, 11. and xxx. 1–3.
 ‡ Isa. xl. 11, lxxv. 23. ¶ Jer. xxx. 20. § Eze. xxxvii.
 25. || xlvii. 23.

the fathers to the *Children*, and the heart of the *Children* to their fathers, lest I come and will smite the earth with a curse.”* Admitting that the Jewish doctors, and lawyers were bad expositors of the law, and the prophets must not they, and every pious reader of the above prophecies understand by them that children were to occupy the same relation, and privileges which they had done from the days of Abraham? Any christian expositor, who understands the plain meaning of words, would apply the passages quoted in their natural, and literal sense. I have omitted many, that may with some reason be taken figuratively, that is, children may mean new born, or young converts to Messiah; but in those produced, this cannot with any propriety be done. Prophecy then did not prepare the Jews silently to suffer their children to be cast out of their church standing and privileges, but cheered them with the hope that the Messiah would reign over and bless them, and their families.

Did John the Baptist prepare them to give up their children, to have them cast out, and treated as heathen? We are taught explicitly in the New Testament that he was the Elijah spoken of by Malachi; and that he should perform what was there promised and foretold.† If he, therefore, did not prepare fathers and children, that is families, for the reception of the Messiah, he did not

* *Mal.* iv. 5, 6. See also *Psalm.* viii. 2.

† *Mat.* xi. 13, 14. xvii. 12, 13. *Luke* i. 17.

answer the great purpose for which he was born, and commissioned, as the messenger of the Lord. I might spare any thing more as proof, or argument that John did turn the heart of the fathers to the children, and the heart of the children to their fathers, and thus, “made ready a people prepared for the Lord.” But, I would call your attention a few minutes to the history of John the Baptist, and our Saviour.

When, “all Jerusalem, and all Judea, and all the region round about Jordan,” went out to John, preaching, and baptizing in the wilderness, were there no children included? On two similar occasions, when our Saviour fed the multitudes miraculously, there were women and children present and partook along with the men. If children were then, as they are now, it would have been next to impossible to have kept them away from John. And when many of the Pharisees and Sadducees came to his baptism, and appear to have calculated on receiving it without repentance, upon the ground that they were the children of Abraham, did he inform them that the covenant of Abraham had come to an end—and that he was to have no more children—and that children were no longer to inherit the blessing of a name and place in the church? Far from it. He teaches explicitly that Abraham was still to have children, though raised from the stones lying before him—he teaches that the unfruitful trees were to be cut down and of course

the fruitful were to be left standing, in the vineyard, with all their branches—he teaches, that the Lord, whose way he was preparing, would *purge his floor*, not burn it up, with the chaff. It may be said that John preached repentance, and that little children could not repent, and therefore they must be excluded from the number prepared for the reception of the Messiah. I answer, that by repentance, I am taught to understand, a change of views, disposition, and conduct, and particularly, of views, respecting the character and mission of Christ. Now if little children *could not repent*, the reason must be that they had no need of repentance. They had no views right or wrong respecting the Messiah, and were naturally incapable of being convicted by John, or any other of cherishing an improper disposition, or conducting contrary to the law of God. This being so, they were without blame, and of course were as fit subjects of Christ's reign, as those who were of mature age and repented. But I feel disposed to deny that little children—that is, those between three, and seven years of age, did not need repentance in the days of John. The views, the disposition and the conduct of their parents they would notice, admire, and imitate. Education among the Jews commenced with the children before they were three years old. And when the hearts of the fathers were turned to their children, they would teach them, and enforce upon them what John had preached.

Matter of fact shows that *families*, and families including little children were prepared for the reception of the Saviour. He did not smite the earth with a curse. Some families received him into their houses, and enlisted under him as their Messiah. Thus he had a people to reign over, and to exercise some little hospitality towards him. When the master of a house received his Apostles they were to say peace to this house, which was certainly peace to the inhabitants, or to the whole family. And when he himself visited one of these families, and was received, as instructed by John or the Apostles, how could the little children, be excluded from his presence, his friendly notice and blessing? We are informed explicitly that on one occasion, being in a family, Jesus called a little child to him, took it up in his arms, and said, "whosoever shall receive this child in my name receiveth me."* If this little child had not been Christ's and a subject of his reign, it could not have been received in his name. The subject under consideration at the time was, membership in the kingdom of Jesus Christ; and he taught his disciples that they must enter as little children, and that as officers they must receive little children, as he did.

Again, little children at another time were brought to our Saviour, that he should lay his hands on them and pray. Luke calls them infants, and little children;† by which we are taught that they

**Mat.* xviii. 2-5. *Mark.* ix. 33-37. and *Luke* ix. 47, 48. †*Luke* xviii. 15, 16. See also *Mat.* xix. 13-15

were somewhere about three years of age. It appears that the disciples considered them unfit subjects of Christ's reign, or Kingdom, and rebuked those that brought them. "But Jesus called them unto him, and said suffer little children to come unto me, and forbid them not, for of such is the Kingdom of God. Verily I say unto you, whosoever shall not receive the Kingdom of God as a little child, (receives it) shall in no wise enter therein." These children, young as they were, *could come to Christ at his call*—they were fit subjects of his reign, and in receiving him in his kingdom, or reign, were the models of instruction to all grown persons who would become his subjects. I know that the common understanding of those words of our Saviour is, that, all must receive Christ in his reign, with the meekness, humility and simplicity of little children. This is true doctrine, but a false, or incorrect interpretation. If our Saviour teaches any thing explicitly in this passage, he teaches that little children were the subjects of his kingdom, and that they had *received* the kingdom. The grammatical construction, the circumstances of the case, and the scope of the whole, will admit of no other meaning. In support of this interpretation and of my main argument, I would call your attention to the fulfilment of the eighth Psalm by the little children in the temple, when our Saviour made his public entrance into Jerusalem.* If you compare Matthew

* *Mat.* xxi. *Maek.* xi. *Luke* xix.

with Luke, you will find that what one says, the *disciples* did, the other says the children did; and these children are called *babes and sucklings*. They were such, however as could walk up to *the mountain of the house*; could sing, and be classed with disciples, that is, *learners*. They received him in the temple as the son of David their father, and their reception of him appears to have been so necessary, that had they been silent, the very stones would have cried out. What were the old and middle aged about that they could not perform sufficiently the part performed by these children? The simple fact is, there were few believers in Jesus, in Jerusalem; and those parents who believed, had believing children, and these children were more numerous than the grown believers. The former may have joined the multitude of the disciples that conducted our Saviour into Jerusalem, whilst the children, instructed respecting his character, and prepared to receive him, ran before and occupied the courts of the temple to hail him there. You may say, what is the bearing of all this, as these children were miraculously inspired by the Holy Ghost to perform this part in honour of Christ? I reply, that the Holy Ghost no doubt had moved upon the minds of these children, but he was not yet miraculously poured out; and why introduce a miracle, when the fact can be accounted for without? If the parents of these children had been instructed and baptized of John, and if they had heard Jesus

or heard of him, and believed, they would communicate to their children, and their children would believe, and be influenced accordingly. All this would be the result of John the Baptist turning the hearts of the fathers to the children, &c. The bearing of the whole, then is, that John the Baptist instead of preparing a people to give up their children to be cast out of their ecclesiastical relation and privileges, prepared, parents and children to receive the Lord Jesus, and they did receive him and were recognized as the members of his kingdom. One more instance of our Saviour extending the blessings of his reign to *families* upon the principle of the Abrahamic covenant, I cannot omit. It is that of the family of Zaccheus.* This man appears to have been truly made a new creature, and when he received Christ as a guest at his table, much to the offence of the Jews, "Jesus said unto him, this day is salvation come to this house, for as much as he also is a son of Abraham." The building in which Zaccheus dwelt did not need the salvation of God; it must be understood, therefore, as *house* often is, in the scriptures, for the *family*. In Abraham all the families of the earth were to be blessed, and the family of Zaccheus was blessed because he was a son of Abraham. Take this and all that had been advanced on this subject, together with Christ's charge to Peter to feed his sheep and his *lambs*, and what we have in the acts of the Apos-

* *Luke* xix. 2. 10.

ties and the writings of Paul, and the conclusion is inevitable, that parents and children stand, and enjoy privileges in the church of Jesus Christ as they did before his incarnation.

Let us now attend to another view of the subject. We have generally taken it for granted that baptism has come in room of circumcision, and the Lord's Supper in the room of the passover. The fact appears to be, that the heathen were taken into the church of God among the Jews by three rites, viz. circumcision, baptism, and sacrifice: but when Christ came and shed his blood, the bloody rites of circumcision, and sacrifice ceased to be obligatory, or necessary, and baptism was retained as answering every purpose. In the passover the flesh of the lamb, unleavened bread and bitter herbs, and wine were the symbols used—in the Lord's Supper, the bread and wine were retained, and the other symbols laid aside. The table of the Lord in the passover was his table in the Supper. It was not even drawn, and spread again. All therefore who sat at it in the passover, must be considered worthy to continue it when the bread, and the wine were again consecrated, as the symbols of the New Testament. Had little children been there celebrating, according to custom, would the Saviour have removed them, when he took and administered the bread and wine the second time? I know there were none there, nor were there any

women; but supposing they had been there, would they have been made to rise and walk off?

Before I advance apostolic example, and authority to prove that the law of the passover, was not repealed but continued as the law of the Lord's Supper, some remarks on the place and manner of forming the Lord's congregation in the New Testament, and of partaking of that ordinance, are necessary. We have seen how the Lord's congregation was formed under the Mosaic dispensation. When our Saviour tabernacled in flesh, the synagogue worship had been instituted; and he by his joining in this worship and preaching in the Jewish synagogues, sanctioned the same. The synagogues were built after the form of the temple, and considered holy. The congregation there assembling must be holy. No heathen, or unclean person was permitted to enter, and unite with the congregation in their worship. A few under the sentence of the first degree of ex-communication might be present, but was not permitted to come nearer any other, than four cubits, (about six feet;) and when he was delivered over to satan, by the sentence of the higher ex-communication, he could no more enter the synagogue. He was then literally *cast out*; and was to be treated as an heathen and a publican.* Thus the expressions, of *casting out—putting out—them that are without—and them that are within,*

* *Lewis.* Book i. Chap 9. *John* ix. 22, 34. xvi. 2. *Mat.* xviii. 17.

which we find used in the New Testament, respecting the ex-communication of church members—and these who belong to the church and those who do not, signify literally a putting out of the house of worship, and those who were permitted, or not permitted to be present in the religious assembly in the celebration of their sacred rites. The large upper rooms which were used for celebrating the passover, one of which our Saviour and his disciples occupied were not common to all who might wish to attend as spectators. All who did not partake, were excluded. In these large upper rooms we find the disciples assembling after our Saviour's ascension;* and it is very evident that none but the disciples were present. After sometime they assembled in houses procured, or erected for the purpose of accommodating large numbers; and these houses were called *churches*;† as well as the congregation that assembled in them for worship. The heāthen and unbelievers might attend without, or at the doors to hear the word, and in later times might be admitted within, but they were not permitted to be present when the Lord's Supper was administered. This custom continued in the church until the fourth century.‡ How it came to be dispensed with, and persons permitted to attend as spectators, without partaking, I may hereafter give some account. This we may rely upon as a fact

* *Acts* i. 13. and xx. 8. † *1 Cor.* xi. 18. and i. 2.

‡ *King's Primitive Church.*

that when “the disciples came together to break bread,” when the church came together to eat the Lord’s Supper, none were admitted to meet with them, or be within the walls of the large upper room, or the house, who did not partake of the holy symbols. Bearing this fact in mind let us attend to the notices given in the Acts of the Apostles and in the Epistles, of Paul, respecting the Lord’s Supper. The first is in Acts ii. 42, 46. and they continued stedfastly in the Apostles’ doctrine, and fellowship, and in breaking of bread, (*Ton arton, the Loaf,*) and in prayers—and they continuing daily with one accord in the temple, and breaking bread from house to house, did eat their meat with gladness and singleness of heart.” On these two verses and the intervening ones, I remark:

1. That it has been generally conceded that the breaking of bread in the 42d verse, signifies the Lord’s Supper, but some have supposed that in the 46th verse it means a common meal. I am disposed to consider the latter as more explicit, and as explanatory of the former. That all the exercises mentioned in these two verses, except the breaking of bread, were religious, there can be no doubt; and why it should not be, seeing there was a religious breaking of bread, no good reason appears. Eating their meal (literally their *food*) with gladness, and singleness of heart may mean their ordinary meals—but at the same time these meals were partook of exclusively by the company of believers,

and in a religious manner. It is said, "all that believed were together, and had all things common; and sold their possessions and goods and parted them to all, as every man had need." Now were there none among the believers that had families, and families including little ones that needed to partake with their parents in the things which were made common? Surely the first Jewish christians would not feed the needy parents, and withhold from the more needy children. It is obvious that there was no separation, or distinction made between parents and children in this common distribution. Now should we admit, that eating meat, as mentioned in the 46th verse, means eating in ordinary meals, what had been made common to all, we must have little ones included among the participators: and then if the company of believers continued in fellowship, and in breaking bread, as in the 42d verse, and this signified a partaking of the Lord's Supper, upon what principle then known and practiced, were the little ones debarred? No instructions had been delivered by Peter, or any of the Apostles informing the believing Jews, that their children were not to partake with them in the New Testament passover, and the feasts accompanying it, as had been the law and custom from the days of Moses; they would therefore most certainly admit them.

2. I must remark, that there appears a direct reference in the 46th verse to the manner of celebra-

ting the passover. The Israelites were to celebrate it by families—each man according to his family. And the words used by the LXX. translators of the Old Testament into Greek, in translating Exo. xii. 3. 21. are the same that are used by the sacred historian, in the 46th verse of Acts. ii. and our translators translate precisely the same words in Chapter v. 42, *every house*. The literal translation would be, *breaking bread according to the family*. The act was participated in by the whole family in opposition to the acts of the whole congregation performed in the Temple. No one private house could contain three thousand, so that they might celebrate the New Testament passover in one house and then in another. But they could all meet in the temple, and perform their other acts of worship there, and then divide off into families, and celebrate the dying love of the Saviour after the manner of the passover. And this appears to be the simple meaning of the language which seems to be used designedly, by the historian, in his first notice of the Lord's Supper in the christian church. It is obvious that the unbelieving Jews would not permit the the followers of Jesus to celebrate his supper in the Temple, commemorative of his death, and significant of life through him.

The next, and only notice of the Lord's Supper in the Acts of the Apostles, is in the 20th Chapter; and it is introduced just after mention had been made of the feast of unleavened bread, that is, the

feast of the passover, verses 6-7. This instance was about twenty-five years after the day of Pentecost, and in a heathen City where the Gospel had been preached, and a church formed. The *disciples* came together to break bread, on the first day of the week; and they met in an *upper chamber*, of the third story; verse, 8-9. Let it be noted, that the *disciples* came together in this private apartment for the express purpose of breaking bread. Paul made use of the occasion for other religious exercises—he preached to them—broke bread, and talked a long while, even to break of day. It was not a promiscuous assembly, composed of communicants and non-communicants, but exclusively of *disciples*. Now the question is, had any of these disciples families, including little children, and did their children meet with them on the first day of the week for the public worship of God? If children were there, they were disciples, and came to break bread with their parents. You may attempt to evade this by saying, if the disciples had children, they were all left at home. And then I would simply state that you have a religious worshipping assembly, unknown either among Jews or christians. Such evasion nothing but a bad cause could require.

Let us now attend to the Epistles of Paul. He takes up the Lord's Supper explicitly in the 11th chapter of his first Epistle to the Corinthians; and here is the principal repeal of the Law of the passover, which I have found advanced by any living

opponent, or dead author. "Let a man examine himself and so let him eat of that bread and drink of that cup. For he that eateth and drinketh unworthily, eateth and drinketh damnation to himself not discerning the Lord's body." The repealing force of this passage is this; "self examination, and discerning the Lord's body are required of all who worthily partake of his table, and these exercises imply the possession of knowledge, faith and love of which little children must be considered incapable, and therefore they are, by these declarations of the Apostle, debarred from this ordinance."

In reply I would remark:

1. That it is a little strange that a repealing act, setting aside the right and privilege, formerly enjoyed by little children, should never once mention them, nor the law under which they enjoyed their right and privilege!

2. The Apostle wrote his first Epistle to the Corinthians about twenty-four years after the resurrection of our Saviour. All this time the law was unrepealed which authorised and required the children of God's people to partake of the Lord's Table. This shows that it was not a part of the ceremonial law, for that law ceased with the sacrifice of Christ, and needed no repeal at so late a period.

3. The occasion of repealing little children from the Lord's Table, if this was a repeal of the law, does not comport with the character of the Apostle, or the spirit of inspiration, by which he wrote. The

old ones, or the leaders of the factions in the church of Corinth grossly profaned the table of the Lord; and reproof and exhortation are all the censure inflicted upon them, whilst the unoffending *little ones* are ex-communicated, and by a repeal of the law heretofore securing them the privilege of the Lord's table, they are forever to be separated from their parents in this holy ordinance!!

4. The law which was repealed, was clear and explicit respecting the subjects of the Lord's table. By it the officers of the church had a plain rule to regulate them, in admitting and debarring; but the repealing act furnishes no such law. It in fact leaves, church officers without one syllable, and directs the whole that is said to individual communicants. It is, "let a man examine *himself*," and not let the church officers examine him whether he be regenerate, or not.

5. If little children were permitted to constitute a part of the religious assembly at the administration of the Lord's Supper, and were by this repealing act of the Apostle debarred from participating, then they formed a party in the church of that sort which he condemns. They to be sure were not "of Paul, of Apolos, or Cephus, but they were a party by themselves; and if so, they probably were those who the Apostles says were hungry, whilst their parents were drunken! These little ones at Corinth, it appears, according to the interpretation given, were very hardly dealt with, whilst the old

sinner had joyful times and received no ex-communication.

6. According to the improper mode of celebrating the Lord's Supper by the Corinthians, the forming of groups, or separate parties in the church is specifically mentioned. If the children were present, and debarred from the participation of the elements, then they formed a separate party, and thus fell under the censure of the Apostle. In one place there was the party of Paul, in another the party of Apollos—in another the party of Cephus—and in another the party of the *little ones*; and this last party had no provision made for them. Might we not, according to this view suppose that they were the hungry ones mentioned by the Apostle, and their parents, the drunken?

7. The argument drawn from these words of the Apostle is the same precisely with that drawn by our Baptist brethren against infant baptism, from Mark. xvi. 15, 16, and Acts viii. 37. He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved—if thou believest with all thine heart thou mayest." The argument is, "believing is the condition here laid down for receiving baptism; infants and little children cannot believe, and therefore they are not to be baptized." How do we meet our baptist brethren, and spoil their argument? Why we say the condition of believing in order to baptism is made for adults, not infants; and if it includes infants, then they cannot be saved; for believing is as much a

condition of salvation, as of baptism. This reply in my opinion, unarms the baptist fairly, and the texts which he brings to repeal infants out of the church, and from baptism cannot touch them. You, as a good Pædobaptist will agree with me in this; if so where is the force of the texts requiring self examination, and discerning the Lord's body as the condition of partaking of his table, when brought to bear upon little children? Were they the sinners in the church of Corinth against which Paul levelled his severe reproofs, and tendered his exhortations? Or did the leaders of the church, sin, and grossly profane the table of the Lord by admitting their little children to partake with them? Where no law is, there is no transgression; and these Corinthians had no law forbidding their children to partake of the New Testament passover. We know from the explicit declarations of the Apostle, that the unworthy partaking of the Lord's Supper by the Corinthians consisted in something else than the admission of little children.

8. The Apostle, in this same Epistle, Chap. vii. 14. had declared that the children of these Corinthians were *holy*. That is, as we Pædobaptists understand it, they were federally, or ecclesiastically holy—holy enough to be church members, and to enjoy the holy ordinance of baptism. Had they lost their membership and their holiness, by the time the Apostle had written on to the eleventh chapter? The Apostle wrote to the *church* of Corinth—

he informed that church that their children were holy—were members along with their believing parents, and, if even *one* was a believer. That church met together in one place—came together in the church,* the house of public worship; were their children now left at home, as too unholy to enter the house of God? Take notice, this church met professedly in one place to eat the Lord's Supper. None but members were present, and all who were present must partake. The Apostle in his Epistle to the church of Ephesus, makes out all their children, who could understand and obey the fifth commandment; *believers and saints*—that is *faithfuls and holy ones*, as you will see by comparing chapter i. 1. with vi. 1-4. Such were the children of the church of Corinth, and did he mean to debar the *faithfuls and holy ones* from the table of the Lord? Such an interpretation, cannot be admitted, of the terms, *self-examination*—and, *discerning the Lord's body*. The simple meaning of the passage is, that the leaders of the church of Corinth had split it up into factions—these factions assembled in the church professedly to eat the Lord's Supper, but they made it their own party supper—made it to distinguish between the several parties, and some eat and drank to excess. There was no discerning of the Lord's body, by the symbols, but they were used as common bread and wine. For this profanation of the ordinance the Apostle reproves them,

* Chap xi. 18-20.

and exhorts every *man* to self-examination and a proper use of the sacred symbols, for time to come. If you choose you may implicate the children in the sins of their parents, but until thirteen years of age they were not accountable to the officers of the church, and therefore the reproof of the Apostle would apply exclusively to their parents. We thus see that this clause so frequently, and triumphantly brought forward by some Pædobaptist, as constituting virtually a repeal of Old Testament law, and establishing a new law respecting the passover, in the Lord's Supper, has been grossly perverted. No lawyer of common sense could ever find a repeal of a law in this; and the context with other declarations of the Apostles, affords strong presumptive proof that little children, in the church of Corinth, partook lawfully of that ordinance.

This presumptive proof is supported by the churches which are mentioned in the Epistles as constituted in single families, or houses. There was a church in the house of Priscilla, and Aquila.* There was also a church in the house of Nymphas.† One would suppose from the expression in these cases, as it stands, in the common translation, that some of the neighbours of Priscilla, Aquila and Nymphas had been constituted into churches, and met in the private houses of these men, for public worship. This, however, is not the idea expressed in the Greek. The words are the same which are

* *Rom.* xvi. 5. i. *Cor.* xvi. 19. † *Col.* iv. 15.

translated, Acts ii. 46 *from house to house*—and in v. 42, *in every house*.* But as we have seen in these instances, and according to the sense and use of the terms, the meaning is, *according to the family*, or by the family. When therefore a church is said to be in a man's house, the meaning is, *a religious society consisting of his family, or that section or part of the church composed by his family*. In this view, families, as families including the young and middle aged belonged to the church; assembled together as families for worship, and as families thus assembled in a church capacity, must have partook of the Lord's Supper the distinguishing ordinance of church members. In connection with these remarks it may be observed that household, or more properly, family baptism, is taught in the New Testament, as practiced, but not as a new thing, recently instituted. No description is given of the age, or qualifications of the members. We are told that all of a certain age may come in through the church standing or professed faith of their parents, and that all over a certain age must be baptized upon a profession of their own faith. The practice had come down from the household or family baptism of proselytes among the Jews, who baptized all the children under thirteen years of age upon their parents profession of faith in, and obedience to the God of Israel.†

*In a house, is not expressed in the Greek New Testament by *Kata oikon*, but by, *en oikia*, or *oiko*.

†Lewis' *Heb. Ant.* iv. 2.

From household baptism, as mentioned in the New Testament we have argued with propriety and no small force in favour of infant baptism. But the argument is equally valid and forcible in favour of little children partaking of the Lord's Supper. The sum of the matter, on this point, is, that the law respecting the membership of children in the church, and their rights and privileges remained unaltered by Christ and his Apostles. Deny this, and grant that there was an alteration of the law, depriving them of membership, and of their rights and privileges, and you and the Baptists are on the same ground. You must produce a new law from the New Testament, respecting their membership, rights, and privileges, as clear and as explicit as the law of the Old Testament. You must show from the new law that their membership, and their privileges are curtailed, and not the same substantially that they were before Christ came. When you have done this, I know a certain people, who would be disposed to erect a monument to your genius.

Hebrews viii. 7-13 has been adduced as containing a repeal of the law respecting the passover, and the right of children to partake of the Lord's Table under the Mosaic economy. It is here argued that the passover belonged to the Sinai covenant—that, that covenant passed away, and the passover, and the law designating those who were worthy communicants passed away with it. To all which it might be replied, that the law of the pass-

over was given to the children of Israel in Egypt, and not at Sinai; and that though connected with that covenant, and typical, as far as the body and blood of the Lamb were used as symbols, yet it was an ordinance previous to the giving of the covenant, and the ceremonial law at Sinai, and the regulations respecting the characters who were to approach unto God in this distinguishing ordinance were not ceremonial. But waving this, I remark secondly, that the new covenant which was to supersede the old, according to the Apostle, in the passage referred to, there was not to be a curtailment of privileges, but an increase. The excellence, or superiority of the new covenant, did not consist in debarring children from approaching unto God, with their parents in his distinguishing ordinances, but in "better promises." And what were some of those promises?

1. This new covenant was to be made, as the old was, with the house (the family) of Israel and Judah, and God's laws were to be put, not in an ark or chest, but in the hearts and minds of his people.

2. He was to be a God unto them and they were to be unto him a *people*. A people must include little children. This is not left to inference.

3. The third promise of the new covenant, but which may be considered, the second "better promise," is, that, "all shall know the Lord"—and that little children might not be excluded, it is added, "from the least to the greatest." If this does not

include little children from the time they can know the Lord, what can it mean? He who can see a repeal of little children from the Table of the Lord, in this passage, has "optics sharp I wean."

Yours, &c.



LETTER 7.



The argument continued—The Holy Scriptures further considered.

DEAR SIR:

You will recollect that in a former letter I considered the following principle of interpreting the word of God conceded by my Pædobaptist brethren, viz: "that when God has once legislated on a subject necessarily requiring his legislation, and he never alters or repeals the act, it stands forever." The law regulating membership in the church, and the privileges, and duties of members is essential to the very being of the church, and we have found an explicit law of God, embracing these subjects, in the Old Testament. No repeal of that law in the New Testament has yet been shown, and I may venture to say never will be shown. Nor can any law be produced as a substitute, regula-

ting membership, and the enjoyment of church privileges. It will not do to say, that the law of the passover was ceremonial, or typical, and ceased of course when Christ came. If the law itself was a type, we ought to have a law from Christ, as its anti-type, or substance. If the membership of infants, and little children, was typical, and typical of the membership of those newly born again, and advanced a little in the christian life under Messiah, then the membership of infants, born of religious parents, is gone, and the baptists are right. If the law granting to children of three years and upwards, the privilege of partaking of the passover, was typical, I wish to know of what? If we must, right or wrong, make it typical, I would suppose it typical of children of three years, and upwards, partaking of the Lord's Supper which was to supercede the passover. But if the law of the Lord's Table in the passover was a typical law—and if the church then was a typical church—and her members typical members, why not upon the same principle maintain that the God of Israel was a typical God—and that then there were only typical penalties, and rewards—a typical hell, and a typical heaven; and that when Messiah came we got the substance of all these types? For my part I must believe that there was among the Israelites a true and substantial God—a true and substantial church with true and substantial laws, members and *Table*—and this God and his Table were as holy then as

they are now, and that therefore the same law must regulate the approaches to that God and that Table—it must admit and debar the same kind of characters. If we have another God—another church—another Table, and other sort of characters partaking of that Table, then there is a propriety in laying aside the old law, and substituting a new. A little discrimination may relieve the mind of any soberly reflecting person, with respect to this subject. Certain symbols used, at the Lord's Table under the Old Testament, it is granted, on all hands, were typical, but it does not thence follow, that the Table was typical, or that the law regulating admission to that table was a typical, or ceremonial law. The body of the Paschal Lamb was one of the symbols formerly laid on the Lord's Table and was typical; it was discontinued when Christ the true Lamb of God was sacrificed, of whom it was a type, but the Table, the bread, and the wine were not laid aside. If they were formerly types they are so still—if they were ceremonial, they are ceremonial still.

The Apostles in illustrating the nature of the church of Christ, and the privileges and duties of her members, had recourse to the house of God, and those who partook of its privileges under the old dispensation; and they are far from inculcating a change of the law respecting that house, “which is now the church of the living God.”

We have before ascertained that those who were considered worthy to stand in any one court of the

house of God, were worthy to enjoy the ordinances there administered; and it was as criminal to profane the house by an unhallowed entrance, as to profane its ordinances. The use I now am about to make of this, may expose me to the charge of Judaizing, I therefore produce Paul and Peter, as my precedents. They both teach us that the church under Christ answers to the house of God under the Mosaic dispensation. Paul taught Timothy, "how to behave in the house of God, which is the church of the living God."* And in addressing the Corinthian church, he writes thus; "know ye not that ye are the Temple of God? If any man defile the Temple of God, him will God destroy, for the Temple of God is holy which Temple ye are."† Again, what agreement hath the temple of God with idols; for ye are the temple of the living God; as God hath said, I will dwell in them, and walk in them, and I will be their God and they shall be my people."‡ To the Ephesian church he writes; "in whom (that is Christ) all the building fitly framed together groweth unto an holy Temple in the Lord: in whom ye also are builded together for an habitation of God through the Spirit."¶ Peter says to believers; "ye are a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, an holy nation, a peculiar people, that ye should shew forth the praises of Him, who hath called you out of darkness into his marvellous light."§

* *i. Tim.* iii. 15. † *i. Cor.* iii. 16, 17. ‡ *ii. Cor.* vi. 16.
 ¶ *Eph.* ii. 21, 22. § *i. Pet.* ii. 9.

What are we taught by all this? First, that the church of God now is his house where he dwells as really, as were the Tabernacle and Temple—and that it is equally holy.

Second, that the gross violation of God's law by the members of the church is as displeasing to him, and dangerous to them, as it was in the days of Moses and Solomon.

Third, that all the visible members of the church, old and young together, are *a royal priesthood, and a holy nation*, and as such, have a right to a place in God's house, and to all the holy ordinances thereof, as the priests, and God's holy people, had to the Tabernacle and Temple, and all the holy ordinances there enjoyed.

Fourth, that to continue any one in the church, registered as a member, who is unholy, and immoral in his conduct, is as criminal a profanation of the church of God now, as it was to admit, and continue the unclean, or strangers in the Tabernacle, or Temple. The Apostles, it appears evident, had not learned, that there were some members of the church, who were merely holy enough to be members, and not holy enough to partake of the Lord's Supper—some who might continue in the house, and were worthy of retaining their names there, but not worthy to sit at the Table, spread for the inmates of the house. And, indeed, it appears a little strange, how any ever learned to cherish such an unscriptural and absurd notion. Let us be at

least consistent, and deny to parents, altogether, the recognition of their children as members of the church by baptism. If we recognise them, and say they are members and still continue them on record as members, let us treat them as such. Let us not say, to them, you may stay in the house of God, but you shall not partake of his Table—you may continue in the family of God, and perform none of the duties of a member, but even grossly violate the law by which it is governed, and all the penalty we will inflict, is, that you shall not partake of the family Table in a particular feast. Why Sir, if we were not under a merciful dispensation, such a profanation of God's house would be instant destruction. One of the objections to the views and proceedings of the Paris Session, which has been urged and urged with much effect with some, is that the consequence must be, to fill the church with irreligious and wicked members. Whereas it is one principal object of the Session to clear the church of such members, and to take measures to prevent their multiplication for the future. In the language of scripture, it is their object, "to cleanse the house of God," and to stand as porters and watchmen to prevent the entrance of the *stranger* and the *unclean*. The objection urged, must take it for granted, that baptized children are not in the church, the house of God, that is, they are not church members. Let this ground be taken, and then there will be some consistency. But so long as persons

will hold to infant baptism, and will bring forward their children, to be recognized as members of the church, and put under consecration to God in baptism, and then permit them to grow up in ignorance, disobedience, and the open violation of his law, and cry out bitterly against their being cut off, such persons, and not Paris Session are really filling the house of God, which is the church of the living God, with irreligious and wicked members. Of such God complained of old, when he said, "they have dealt treacherously against the Lord; for they have begotten strange (heathen) children.* Thus saith the Lord God, O ye house of Israel, let it suffice you of all your abominations in that ye have brought into my Sanctuary *strangers* uncircumcised in heart, and uncircumcised in flesh to be in my Sanctuary to pollute, even my house."† Multitudes of such are now in God's church, his holy house, and their number is daily and rapidly increasing, much more rapidly than the number of the truly pious. Parents rush with their children to baptism—the watchmen and porters admit them—they stand registered on the church's records, as members—they disregard her instructions—trample upon her laws—spurn her government—mingle with the world in sin and folly, and if there should be a few faithful watchmen, to raise their voice, and talk of discipline, and ex-communication, they do so at

*Hos. v. 7. †Eze. xliv. 6. 7. In the Hebrew—
"children of strangers."

their peril! O Sir! were the Saviour to come among us would he find his Father's house in a purer state than he found it among the Jews? A faithful observance and execution of the constitution and laws of Christ's church can never fill it with irreligious and unholy members: but the neglect of those laws, and the substitution of the doctrines and customs of men have filled it with such characters.

You will pardon, Sir, this digression which you may term declamation and invective, and return with me to the argument.

The illustration which the Apostle Paul gives, in the eleventh chapter of his Epistle to the Romans, of the church; and the casting out of the Jews, and the bringing in of the Gentiles, under the figure of an Olive Tree, has been used with great force in favour of infant baptism. Is it not of equal force in favour of little children partaking of the Lord's Supper? The natural branches, the Jews and their children were cut off, and the branches of the wild Olive, the Gentiles, and their children were grafted in; and being in, they partook of the same privileges, if not in form, at least in substance, that were enjoyed by those that were cut off. This is the Pædobaptist argument; and I have never yet heard it refuted. Now if children of three years old and upwards partook of the passover with their parents among the Jews; and the Gentiles and their children have come into the same church

standing and privileges, must they not partake together of that ordinance which answers to the pass-over? How any consistent Pædobaptist can evade this argument I know not; but should he succeed I know the Baptists will be indebted to him for a very great favour.

In connection with this argument let us attend to another of the same nature furnished by the Apostle in his Epistle to the Ephesian church. That church was addressed as made up of *saints* and *faithful*, and when the Apostle in the application of the doctrines and instructions advanced in the body of the Epistle addresses, by way of exhortation, the several classes of which the church was composed, mentions *wives* and *husbands*—*children* and *parents*—*servants* and *masters*.* If any one should say that children here, are children come to the years of maturity; I reply, and say, if so, then the exhortation of the Apostle will not apply—for they are exhorted to be obedient to their parents; and their parents are exhorted to *bring them up* in the nurture and admonition of the Lord. They were not yet *brought up*; and they were such as were subjects of the fifth commandment given to the children of Israel at Mount Sinai.

Again, if any should say that the children of the church of Ephesus were not *saints* and *faithfuls*, then I say, with the same propriety, that the *wives* and *husbands*, the *parents*, *servants* and *masters*;

* Chap. v. 22-25. vi. 1-9.

that were addressed as constituting the church were not *saints and faithfuls*. You may fix what interpretation you please to the terms *saints* and *faithful*; whatever the Apostle meant by them that the children were as truly as the parents. Now the saints and faithful at Ephesus, when in their heathen state had been aliens from the commonwealth of Israel, and strangers to the covenant of promise, having no hope, and without God in the world, but when they embraced the Gospel, they became "fellow-citizens, with the saints, and of the household of God.*" Fellow-citizens of what saints? Why those who had been of the commonwealth of Israel, and had the covenants of promise, securing all church privileges to *families*—to parents and their children. The Ephesians therefore becoming fellow-citizens of the saints, were saints themselves, and they came into all the privileges of citizens—the privilege of being recognised as citizens by the distinguishing ordinances, appointed for the purpose. In this way the Apostle reasons, when he says, "the Gentiles are fellow *heirs*, and of the same body, and partakers of his promise in Christ by the Gospel."† *Fellow heirs* of what? Of every privilege which the Israelites enjoyed, and which the first believing Jews enjoyed, before the Gentiles were brought in. If these Jews, by believing on Christ had their privileges curtailed—and lost the privilege of having their children recognised with them in the dis-

* Chap. ii. 12, 19.

† Chap. iii. 6.

distinguishing seals of God's covenant, then they were not heirs of Abraham and the promise made to him, and the Gentiles uniting with them were not fellow heirs. The inheritance had passed away, and they were fellow heirs of _____.

If the Apostle's argument, has any foundation, and any force, the Gentile believers came into the enjoyment of all those privileges from which they had been debarred by the former dispensation, in the commonwealth of Israel. Now, Sir, admit this and the little *saints* and *faithfuls*, partook of the distinguishing privileges, along with their parents in the church of Ephesus. If any deny that they partook of the Lord's Supper, I deny that they partook of baptism.

In support of this argument, I would remark, that the Apostle, not only illustrates the church membership and privileges of the saints of Ephesus by the former membership and privileges among the Jews, but also by contrasting the mysteries of the Gospel with the mysteries of the Heathen, or those mysteries into which the Ephesians had been initiated, and which they enjoyed in the Heathen, idolatrous state. To be satisfied of this, compare Chapter iii. 2-12 with v. 7-13: and consult *Mc-Night's preface to this Epistle, Sect. vii.*

Infants were initiated into these Heathen mysteries among the Greeks, as was before shown, and they partook of the wicked and idolatrous rites with their parents, which were celebrated in the inte-

rior of their Temples, in the darkness of night. Imitating, but corrupting and prostituting, the religious rites instituted by the true God, among the Israelites, the heathen had their sacred Temples—their lustrations, their feasts upon sacrifice; from all which the profane, and those not initiated were excluded. Above the doors of their Temples was written in large letters, *Procul, Procul este profani*; O, ye profane, keep far, far away! Thus the religious rites enjoyed within their temples were free only to the initiated, and no other were permitted to be present. Hence these rites were called *mysterics*. They were kept secret and out of view of all but the worshippers, who had been initiated and professed allegiance to the God, or Goddess to whom the Temple had been dedicated. The Apostle, in allusion to this, says, in his first Epistle to the Corinthians, “the things which the Gentiles sacrifice they sacrifice to Devils and not to God, and I would not that ye should have fellowship with Devils. Ye cannot drink the cup of the Lord, and the cup of Devils; ye cannot be partakers of the Lord’s Table and the Table of Devils.”* It appears that the Gentiles had initiated the people of God in their sacrifices, and feasting upon them, but now they are contrasted with the sacrifice of the Lord Jesus and the feast instituted upon it. The Jews and the Gentiles had their children initiated—had them partakers of their sacrificial feasts, their *mysterics*—

*Chap. x. 20, 21,

the church of Ephesus was composed of parents and children—all declared to be *saints*, initiated by baptism—they had left the Heathen mysteries, and become heirs of the mysteries of the Gospel—they had left the Table of Devils and came to the Table of the Lord; would they contrary, both to Jews and Heathen, separate from that table the little ones? You cannot with any consistency, or the least shadow of authority say, that the inheritance shall descend to some of the heirs and not to others. The *church* of Ephesus was called into the fellowship of the mysteries of Jesus Christ, and that church was composed of wives and husbands—children and parents—servants and masters, and with the same propriety that you debar one of these classes from the Table of the Lord, the whole may be debarred.

The Apostle John affords some incidental proof similar to that now advanced in favour of little children forming a class in the church of God well known as entitled to distinguishing privileges. In his first Epistle he addresses christians in general under the endearing appellation of "*my little children*."* That the words are here used in their secondary, and figurative sense there can be no doubt. But when he addresses the same christians, according to their different ages, he uses the words, *little children* in their literal meaning, without the endearing adjective, *my*—"I write unto you, little

* Chap. ii. 1, 18, 28.

children—I write unto you fathers—I write unto you young men.”* This is an additional instance of children forming a constitutional class, and part of a christian church, and the special objects of Apostolic instruction; and an instance that little children, not thirteen years of age, are under special obligations, and called to perform their part as church members. It shows that minors after infancy were known and distinguished, as little children, and *youth*. The class of infants is not mentioned in this place, because they could not yet, be fit subjects of instruction and exhortation. But I have introduced this passage, principally, to show, that what was said before respecting the different classes of minors, was known and recognised in the New Testament church; and for the purpose of supporting what will hereafter be introduced on the subject.

The evidence now submitted appears to me, to clear the God of the Bible from violating, in his positive institutions, the *unity* which he established by the law of nature, between parents and their children. A clear and explicit law from the Old Testament has been produced, securing to children with their parents, membership and the distinguishing privileges of the church of God; and the New Testament, so far from containing a repeal of this law, plainly recognises it and the law of nature as in force, regulating the Apostolic churches.

*Verses 12, 13. More properly, *youth*.

You may say with respect to the evidence from the New Testament; “is it not strange that on a subject of so much importance as communion in the Lord’s Supper, nothing more explicit respecting little children partaking, should be produced. Why are we not told in so many words that it was their privilege and duty to partake of this ordinance; and that they actually did partake of it in the days of the Apostles? To this I reply,

1. By asking, why on a subject of so much importance, as infant baptism nothing more explicit should be produced by its advocates from the New Testament?

2. If an alteration in the constitution of the church respecting the membership of children, and their enjoyment of privileges had been found necessary by Christ and his Apostles; or if any believing parents, either Jews, or Gentiles, had, in those days, fallen out with their children, and, regardless of all natural affection, wished them turned out of the church, by a repeal of the law, which made them members, then we might rationally expect to find something very particular and explicit on the subjects of their standing and their privileges. Infant baptism, and the right of *little ones* to the Lord’s Table, we might find treated as clearly and as fully as the doctrine of the resurrection, or of justification before God, by faith alone. But as it appears there were none, in the Apostle’s days so unnatural and wicked, as to wish their children separated

from them in the precious and distinguishing privileges of the church, we have precisely such notices in reference to infant membership, infant baptism and the communion of little children as might be expected. As the case was, it would be strange indeed if these subjects had been taken up and discussed with the same explicitness and fullness, as we find them treated in the Old Testament. Infants had been members—had enjoyed the distinguishing seal of God's covenant—and little children had taken their seats with their parents at the Lord's Table in the passover from the days Moses. No one thought the law, and the practice, after an experiment, of nearly two thousand years, unnatural, injurious, and such as should cease forever. Why then legislate again on these subjects when there was no necessity, and no one calling for it? You should recollect, that according to the rules of controversy I am not bound to prove a *negative*—that is, prove that God has not violated the law of nature, and has not repealed his law of the Old Testament, respecting parents and children. If any should assert that he has, they are bound to prove their assertion. But, however, the evidence in favour of the negative may be deficient in explicitness and fullness, I must consider it satisfactory until something more explicit and full be advanced in support of the affirmative.

I am yours, &c.

LETTER 8.



Church history—Ignatius—Primitive churches—Infant communion—Church of Rome—Reformed churches—Differ in their views and practice in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries—American churches.

DEAR SIR:

As the holy scriptures are the *perfect* and *only* rule of faith and practice in the church of God, and as they are very explicit and decisive on the subject we have been considering, it may appear superfluous to call in the aid of church history, and adduce *human* authority in support of what is abundantly established by *divine*. I, however, am aware that in the present case, as in many others, resort will be had to the practice and views of the primitive, and even more modern christian church. If I therefore can show that the views and practice given from the scriptures, in the preceding letters, are supported by church history much cavil may be obviated.

It may be necessary in this place to caution you against expecting any thing in church history, very explicit on the subject of little children partaking of the Lord's Supper in the first and second centuries. The subject was not agitated—there

were none to deny them the privilege, which they had long enjoyed in the house of God. We may, therefore, look only for incidental references, and circumstantial proof, such as we have in the New Testament, though in many instances much stronger.

All ecclesiastical historians of any note, agree that the Lord's supper for nearly the two first centuries, was in most of the churches, celebrated with great simplicity, every Lord's day, and in some twice on that day, and two or three times through the week, or on every day.* No pomp—no parade—no lengthy religious exercises, were then appended to it; but it was observed with the simplicity that marked its first celebration by Christ and his disciples.

Ignatius, Bishop of the church of Antioch, and who suffered Martyrdom, A. D. 107, wrote certain Epistles to the churches of Asia, which are yet extant. In these, he exhibits the church as "the Temple of God"—and church members as those admitted within unto the Altar, by the Bishop, and Elders, and Deacons.† And, "every one without the Altar was unclean, and deprived of the bread of God;" all within partook of that bread. To the Philadelphians, his language is, "I write to you and

**John Brown of Haddington's Spol. for Treg. Com. Calvins Inst. Aart. The Lord's Supper.*

†*Epis. to the Magnesians—to the Philadelphians, Ephesians and Trallians.*

admonish you, that you use one faith, one preaching, and one Eucharist; for there is one flesh of our Lord Jesus Christ, and his one blood shed for us, one bread broken for all, and one cup distributed to all; one altar for every church, and one Bishop with the Presbytery and the Deacons, my fellow citizens." And in the same Epistle, like the Apostle Paul, he addresses the various classes which composed the church—and constituted the *all*, to whom the broken bread, and the cup were distributed, viz: wives and husbands—virgins, children and parents—servants and masters.

In the same Epistles, he represents the church, or people of God as separated, and alone in the participation of the Lord's Supper, as was the custom in the days of the Apostles. All that were permitted to be present were communicants. *All* the church were exhorted to meet together in one place, and to "be diligent to come together more frequently to the Eucharist of God for his glory." Were not the little children included?

Speaking of the Lord's Supper, Ignatius, in one instance, uses very strong figurative language, which appears afterwards to have led to infant communion and much superstition. He calls the bread broken, "the medicine of immorality—the antidote of death, but life with God, through Jesus Christ—the medicamentum expelling all evils."

In the account which histories give us of the church and worship of God in the second and third

centuries, we have the three following classes mentioned—the *Audientes*, the mere hearers—the *Catechumens*, those from the heathen who were under catechetical instruction as preparatory for admission into the church by Baptism, and the *perfect*, or faithful, who were members entitled to all the privileges of the church. The first class might enter the place of worship, and hear the word read, and preached; but they could not be present when the prayers were offered. The second class might not only hear, but remain and join in the prayers; but could not be present at the celebration of the Lord's Supper, until they had advanced to the degree of the competents or perfect. Then they were baptized and partook of the other ordinances.* “All those that were baptized were looked upon as members of the church, and had a right to all the privileges thereof, except they had been guilty of gross and scandalous sins, as idolatry, murder, adultery, and such like, for then they were cast out of the church.”† “When the other parts of divine worship were ended and the celebration of the eucharist was to begin, the *Catechumens*, the *penitents* and *all* except the communicants were to depart, as Tertullian says hereof, “*pious initiations drive away the profane.*” These being *mysteries* which were to be kept secret and concealed from all except the faithful, inasmuch as to others, the very method and manner of their actions

**King's Primitive church.* Part i. Chap. vi.

†*Ibid.*

herein were unknown, which was observed by the Pagans, who objected to the christians the secrecy of their mysteries; which charge Tertullian does not deny but confessing it, answers, that, that was the very nature of *mysteries* to be concealed, as Ceres's were in Samothracia.* “The elements being blessed, the Deacons give to *every one present* of the consecrated bread and wine.”† This was the practice in Samaria and other countries, in the days of Justin Martyr, A. D. 150. Now the question is were the children put out as often as the Lord's Supper was administered, that is, at least every first day of the week, with the unbelieving, the unbaptized and profane, or were they included with their parents, and with them called *faithfuls*? Were they kept ignorant of the *mysteries* of the church in which they were brought up, and received the Lord's nurture and admonition? I answer no.‡ The children always composed with their parents the public worshipping assembly and were called *faithfuls*—they were not treated as aliens and separated, at once from their parents, and the house of God. This would have been so contrary to the law of nature, and all former practice that it would have required nothing short of an imperative, divine injunction. Pliny writing to the Emperor Trajan, A. D. 106, respecting the christians in By-

* *King's Prim. Church.* Part ii. Chap. vi.

† *Ibid.* † *Wall His. Inf. Bap.* Part ii. Chap. 9; and Part i. Chap. 12 and 15.

thinia, and enquiring how the persecuting and bloody edict was to be executed against them; says, "that all ranks and ages, and even of both sexes would be involved;" and asks, "whether no distinction was to be made between the *young* and the *adult*." He says that according to his information, "the whole of their guilt, or their error was, that they met on a certain stated day, before it was light, and addressed themselves in a form of prayer to Christ, as to some God, binding themselves by a solemn oath, &c. after which it was their custom to separate and then re-assemble, to eat *in common* a harmless meal." The young and adult—all ranks and ages and even of both sexes were liable to fall under the persecutions prescribed; and they eat in common a harmless meal, when assembled together. Now if this was not the harmless meal that distinguished them as Christians—if it was not the Lord's Supper, and if the *young* as well as the *adult* were not found there, how, could they as christians be in danger? In A. D. 210, "Cecilius, the heathen interlocutor says—the christians come together on an appointed day with *all their children*, their sisters and mothers: persons of each sex, and of every condition. After feeding plentifully, the lights are put out."* It is merely necessary to remark that this enemy of the christians, in the first sentence, stated what was the truth, and in the second adds what was false for the sake of calumniating. Had

* *Evidences on Baptism*, Letter iv. 107.

the first been false, the calumny would have had no ostensible foundation to support it. Christians did come together on the appointed day, that is, the Lord's day, to keep the feast commemorative of his death. And this heathen had seen them go with all their children; but as none except the initiated could be present at the celebration he knew nothing about the manner they conducted on the occasion, and thence forged his calumny.

Again, that little children composed in part the public religious assemblies of the early christians and of course partook of the Lord's Supper with their parents, appears from the following facts stated by good authority. Previous to baptism some such creed as this was proposed to the candidate, and his assent required; viz: "*Whether he believed in God the Father, Son and Holy Ghost, remission of sins and eternal life through the church!*" In later times this creed was enlarged and called the *Apostles creed*. For a long time, however, it was not committed to writing, and proposed in various words, in different churches. Christian writers of the third, fourth and fifth century call it, *the rule of the faith and truth—the gift of salvation—the faith of the Catholic Sacrament—the seal of our heart, and a military sacrament—the illumination of the soul, the perfection of believers—the entrance into life—the gate of salvation—the covenant of life—the plea of salvation, and the indissoluble sacrament of faith between God and us*. Jerome of the fifth century informs us that,

this symbol of our faith and hope delivered by the Apostles was not written in paper and ink, but in the fleshly tables of the heart. And Petrus Chrysologus of the same century, frequently exhorts his hearers, to preserve this gift in the most inward recesses of their hearts, not to permit vile paper to depreciate this precious gift, or black ink to darken this mystery of light.* “This creed was studiously concealed from the pagan world and not revealed to the *Catechumens* till just before their baptism, or initiation in the christian mysteries, when it was delivered unto them, as that secret note, mark, or token by which the *faithful*, in all parts of the world should interchangeably know and be known.”† But whilst the creed was thus kept secret from the world, and even the *Catechumens*, it was not so with respect to the children of believers. “It was handed down from father to son.”‡ Being so highly prized, christian parents would necessarily include it in the nurture and admonition of the Lord, which they were bound to give their children. But this creed was the secret note mark, or token by which the *faithful* were distinguished and known. It was the sign of church membership, and the passport to all church privileges. It was one of the holy *mysteries* of the church—and the gift of salvation. Now as children had it communicated to them by their christian parents they were reckoned among the *faithful* and were

* *King's His. of the Apostles creed, Cap. i.*

† *Ibid.* ‡ *King's Prim. Church, Part ii. Chap. 3.*

not shut out with the world and the Catechumens when the Lord's Supper was administered. But if they were permitted to be present they partook; for as already shown, none were permitted to be present but the communicants.

The history of *infant communion*, which prevailed in the church at an early period, affords strong proof that the communion of *little* children came down from the Apostles. Ecclesiastical historians differ respecting the period when *infant communion* in the Lord's Supper became generally prevalent. Mosheim, and Dr. Samuel Miller assert, that it prevailed in the second century, but do not determine to what extent.* Spanhemins, and Wall deny that it was practiced so soon—the first, grants that it was introduced in the third century;† and the latter, in the beginning of the fourth.‡ The probable fact appears to be this, that infant communion, like superstition, in every form, was gradually introduced—that in a few churches it might have been practiced in the end of the second century—that it spread in the third, and was very general and openly pled for and defended in the fourth, and fifth. Dr. Miller admitting the fact that the corruption existed in the second century, considers it unaccountable. He says, “now that this practice had no foundation either in scripture or Apostolic

*Mosheim *Eccl. His. Cent. ii. and Dr. Miller's Letters. i. Series Let. 8.* †Samma *His. Eccl. Cent. ii. and iii.* ‡*His. of Inf. Bap. Part. ii. chap. 2.*

example is conceded by the whole christian world. How then shall we account for its introduction and general adoption in the church?" To clear this part of church history of difficulty the following remarks are offered; and they will I hope satisfactorily evince, that although infant communion was a superstitious innovation made in the church at an early period, yet the communion of little children, from three years and upwards, did prevail in all the churches, and was no superstitious innovation.

First, the modern writers, both in theology, and ecclesiastical history appear never to have ascertained, and clearly defined what infancy is—how far it extends, and what is the character, standing and rights of children in the church of God, when infancy terminates. Hence in their writings, infants, *little children* and youth are confounded and grouped together and thus what in ancient history was said of one of these classes, is attributed to another, or to all of them. If the moderns would first inform us that infancy among the Jews extended to three full years, and among the Greeks to four—that then the age of *little ones* commenced, and terminated somewhere about thirteen or fourteen; and then in their subsequent references to these various classes observe the distinction, much obscurity would be obviated, and many unaccountables would be easily accountable. That the early christian writers observed the above distinction, and which in a former letter was shown to exist in the holy scriptures,

will appear by an extract from Ireneus Bishop of Lyons, in France, in the second century, and who was the disciple of *Polycarp* the disciple of the Apostle John. Speaking of Christ, he says, "therefore as he was a master he had also the age of a master. Not disdainng, nor going in a way above human nature, nor breaking in his own person, the law which he had set for mankind; but sanctifying every several age by the likeness that it has to him; for he came to save all persons by himself—all I mean who by him are regenerated (or baptized) unto God—*infants*, and *little ones* and *boys* and *youths* and elder persons; for infants being made an infant sanctifying infants. To little ones he was made a little one, santifying those of that age, and also giving them an example of Godliness, justice and dutifulness;—to youths, he was a youth, &c."* *Polycarp* had this classification, no doubt, from the Apostle John, as it has been noticed in substance in the second chapter of his first Epistle. Ireneus had it from *Polycarp* his master. And let it be noted that he says Christ became a *little one*, giving them of this age an example of *Godliness*, &c. Let us now advert to the declarations of some ecclesiastical writers. *King* says, that, in the time of *Cyprian*, Bishop of Carthage, which was about the middle of the third century, "it was usual for children

**Wall. His. Inf. Bap.* Part i. Chap. 3.

In the above I have translated, pueros boys, different from Mr. Wall who translates it children.

and sucking infants to receive the sacrament.”* Here children and infants are both mentioned. *Wall* denies that there is any proof that mere infants partook of the Lord’s Supper in the days of Cyprian, but says, that children of four or five years did partake of it in the church of Carthage, and in giving what he considered most probable on the whole matter from all that he could ascertain, he says,

“ 1. That in Cyprian’s time the people of the church of Carthage did often times bring their children younger than ordinary to the communion.

“ 2. That in St. Austin and Innocent’s time, (fourth and fifth century) it was in the western parts given to mere infants, and that this continued from that time about 600 years.

“ 3. That sometime during this space of 600 years, the Greek church, which was then low in the world, took this custom of the Latin church, which was more flourishing.

“ 4. That the Roman church about the year 1000 entertaining the doctrine of Transubstantiation, let fall the custom of giving the holy elements to infants, and the other western churches mostly following their example, did the like, upon the said account; but that the Greeks not having the said doctrine, continued, and do still continue the custom of communicating infants.” Again he says, “ that it is not time, that all christians are satisfied that the

**Prim. Church*, Part ii. Chap. 6.

ancients did ill in giving infants the Eucharist; for nearly half the christians in the world do still continue that practice. The Greek church, the Armenians, the Maronites, the Cophti, the Abassens and the Muscovites—and for ought I know do all the rest of the eastern christians.* If Wall be correct, then it was not infant communion, but the communion of little children, as young as four or five years; that prevailed in Carthage, in Cyprian's time. And as such have been incorrectly termed infants, by many, their communion, by the same error, was called *infant communion*. In the fourth and fifth century, when infant communion did prevail, and its advocates, declared that it came down from the Apostles, they must have alluded to the communion of little ones and confounded the two together. But as before remarked, infant communion might have been practiced in some few churches as early as the latter part of the second century, or beginning of the third, and Wall, nevertheless, be correct with respect to its general prevalence, and public defence. If we advert to the glowing figurative language of Ignatius at the beginning of the second century, respecting the bread in the Lord's Supper; and to the construction and application of John vi. 53–58, made by the christian writers of this century; and if we also admit that it had been the custom for little children to commune, with them there is no difficulty in accounting for infant commun-

* *His. Inf. Bap.* Part. ii. Chap. 9.

ion in some churches falling into superstition in the beginning of the third century. But if none under fourteen, or fifteen, or the age, which we have been in the habit of considering, the age of *discretion*, had enjoyed the privilege of partaking of the Lord's Table among the Jews, the Apostolic christians, and those succeeding, I agree with Dr. Miller, that the prevalence of infant communion in the second, third, or even the fourth century is unaccountable. But in view of the facts just stated, there is no difficulty in the case. So soon as there was a life-giving virtue attributed, by the doctors of the church, to the sacred elements, and their participation made essential to salvation, it was very easy and natural to pass on from the *little ones* of three or four years, to infants. A similar process had been made among the Jews respecting infant communion in the passover, when they gave place to superstition and the commandments of men. But to pass from youth of fourteen to infants, in the administration of the Lord's Supper, in the second or third century, is truly unaccountable. It would have been so great a stride, so wonderful and daring an innovation, that it would have agitated the whole christian church, and produced a contention as memorable as that which arose respecting the observance of Easter.

These remarks make the several ecclesiastical historians intelligible; and enable us to see how their apparent different statements respecting in-

infant communion, are not really contradictory; and that the communion of little ones preceded, and was by some confounded with it. This, taken in connection with the other evidence advanced from Ignatius and church history, prove to my mind very satisfactorily, that the church admitted little children to partake of the Lord's Supper from the days of the Apostles until that communion was entirely blended with infant communion in the prevalence of superstition. From that period to this the distinction has been lost. Infants, little ones, and youth are all classed together.

After the third or fourth century, the church's practice and authority with regard to almost any subject, are of very little weight with protestants. An historical sketch, however, of the Lord's Supper down to our own times is necessary to remove some difficulties, and meet some objections that may be urged against the views which I have been endeavoring to establish.

From the second century, pompous appendages and rites were thrown around the church and ordinances of God. This was particularly the case with respect to the Lord's Supper, as you may see by consulting Mosheim, or almost any other ecclesiastical historian. Its importance, its saving virtue and holy nature were the themes of the most glowing and enthusiastic acclamation. So much sanctity and terror were thrown around it in the days

of Ambrose, Chrysostom, and Augustin,* that people, the members of the church began to abstain from communing. They would sometimes enter the church, hear the sermon, and then retire, which practice was severely censured by the above named Fathers.† Decrees of councils were passed to compel them to commune, at least once a year. This at length became the common practice. Other reasons are given by Brown of Haddington, in his *apology for the more frequent administration of the Lord's Supper*, why the practice of communing so seldom became prevalent in the fourth century, and no doubt some of them had their influence; but it appears from Chrysostom, as quoted by Calvin, that the plea of the people was, that they were not prepared. The ceremonies were numerous—notions, which terminated in transubstantiation, were prevailing, the danger of eating and drinking judgment or as we have it translated, *damnation*, was proclaimed in dreadful tones—the life and power of Godliness had greatly declined, and hence, the seldomer persons communed the less their consciences condemned and terrified them. This superstitious veneration and slavish fear for the ordinance increased, until the bread and wine were declared to be the very body and blood of Christ, and then they were denied to infants and the common peo-

* *Fourth and fifth century.* † *Calvins Inst.* Book iv. Chap. 17, and *John Forbes His. Theo.*

ple; and the clergy alone were considered sufficiently holy to partake of the sacred symbols. Monks in the dark ages had extirpated nearly all the social virtues. All the fine and tender feelings of the marriage state—all the sympathies and silken ties between husband and wife, father and children were sacrificed to Moloch; and thus the Monks were prepared, as fit butchers of the man of sin, to drive the little children, infants, and all from the Table of the Lord. Holiness, and a professed regard for the sacred elements were the prettexts for this unnatural, this dreadful deed.

At what period the doors of the church were opened for the admission of mere spectators of the celebration of the Lord's Supper, I have not been able to ascertain. We may, however, reasonably conclude, that when it became customary for members of the church to be mere spectators, and when the great men of the world became the patrons of christianity, as was the case in the days of Constantine, some would be gratified with beholding the mysteries, without making a profession, and receiving baptism. The doors once opened could not be easily closed. And when the church became entirely corrupt, when the sacred elements were carried about for the adoration of the people, and the world and wicked men obtained the ascendancy, it is easy to see that the separating, distinguishing line, constituted by the Lord's Supper, between

those that were the people of God and the rest of the world, would not be regarded.*

The reformation in the sixteenth century restored the people to many of their rights, and opened their eyes upon the tyranny and abominations which had prostrated and defiled the church of God. The bread and the wine were restored to the laity, in the Lord's Supper; but infants and little children being classed together and both considered equally unfit, or incompetent to partake worthily of that holy ordinance, were left where they had been put by the saintly agents of the man of sin. It appears that some plead for the restoration of infants, but were unsuccessful, so far as I have been able to learn, in the reformed churches.† Had they examined the scriptures and made the proper distinction between infants, and little children, and advocated the cause of the latter, leaving the former to commune in the persons of their mothers, there would, in all probability, have been no occasion, or necessity for writing the present letters.

With respect to the *qualifications* of those admitted to the church and her distinguishing privileges, some remarks are necessary. The practice of the

* In 1548 a denunciation was to be pronounced in the churches of England, and all who had not repented were required to withdraw, lest the Devil should enter into them as he did into Judas. Neal's *His. Puritans*, Chap. 2. † *Wit's Econ. Lord's Supper*.

Apostles appears to have been first to preach the Gospel, that is, deliver their testimony fully and clearly, respecting Jesus Christ, and the way of obtaining salvation through him; and if any professed to believe the testimony, and a willingness to take him for their Saviour and ruler, they were baptized, and in due time organised into a church, for the enjoyment of all privileges. Thus a *profession* of faith and obedience to Christ, was all that was required for admission into the church, and a participation of all privileges. There was no doubt some difference made between the Jewish converts who had been instructed from the Old Testament, and the heathen who had every thing respecting the true God and his worship to learn; yet the process was short, and the qualification for membership, a simple profession of faith and obedience. When superstition began to prevail, and vital godliness declined—when *forms*, instead of substance, and a technical, philosophical theology, gradually supplanted the simple religion of the Bible, it became much more difficult to get into the church, and to a participation of the Lord's Supper. The Catechumens had to pass through a long process, of instruction and discipline, and at last entered with fasting and many ceremonies of men's invention.* Penitents, that is, those who had apostatized or fallen from their profession of christianity, could not be restored without a long series of penance and mortifica-

**King's Prim. Church.*

tion. Thus things went on until superstitious rites and ceremonies—austere forms, Jewish, or pagan lustrations, &c. &c. drove all true religion from the church; and at last no qualification short of *priestly orders*, could obtain the bread and the wine in the Lord's Supper.

We have seen what was the law and custom among the Jews, with respect to their children partaking of the passover. Until thirteen they partook through their parents. Being circumcised and contaminated with no ceremonial, or legal uncleanness they received the sacred symbols of the Lord's Table, in the passover, upon the responsibility of their natural guardians. In other words, their parents, if the expression be proper, qualified for them. But when thirteen years old, the father resigned his trust and responsibility, and the education they had received, and the maturity to which they had arrived, were the qualifications which were supposed necessary to constitute them suitable communicants in the passover, as personally responsible moral agents, and members of the church. If afterwards they should, in any thing, act unworthily, or violate the laws of God's house they were subject to discipline. Now, although I can find no explicit authority, to show that the same law and custom prevailed in the christian church, yet from the nature of things, and a ceremony which is early noticed, and has in later times been called *confirmation*, there can be little doubt that

such was the fact. Imposition of hands had been customary from the days of Abraham, as a form of setting apart to the enjoyment of blessings, and of office; and by it, in the days of the Apostles, the Holy Ghost was given. Paul speaks of the *doctrine of the laying on of hands*;* and in the early days of the christian church it was used after baptism; and by some called *absolution* and *consummation*. The hands were imposed, and prayer at the same time offered, for the communication of the holy spirit, who consummated the work of the souls conversion unto God. *Chrism*, or anointing with oil was at the same time used by some, and in process of time became common, both in baptism, and the laying on of hands.† According to this signification and use of *the laying on of hands*, it might very naturally be applied to the children of the church, when they passed from the period of childhood, to that of youth, and were considered capable of choosing and acting for themselves in the matters of religion. They were then recognized and set apart upon their own personal responsibility, to the discharge of the *duties*, and the enjoyment of the privileges of church members. Although there be not very clear authority for this, yet it is the only foundation which Papists have for their sacrament of *confirmation*; and the Episcopaleans; who do not call it a sacrament, but

**Heb.* vi. 2. †*King's Prim. Church.* Part ii. Chap. 5 and *Dr. Hey's Lectures.* Book iv. Art. 25, Sec. 3.

an ordinance, or rite, which youth are to secure, before they receive the Lord's Supper. The former say, "that confirmation is not to be given till young persons have the use of their *reason*; and therefore it must be deferred till they are eleven years old, or however till they are six." The latter, that they should not be confirmed under fourteen.* The reformed French church fixed the communion of young persons at above twelve years of age.† This, or fourteen is generally considered by all protestants, as the period at which they arrive at the years of discretion, and when they ought to partake of the Lord's Supper. The qualifications which they have required have varied in different churches, and sometimes in the same church. In the English church, in the days of Edward VI. it was enjoined upon church officers; "that, they examine such who come to confession, whether they can recite the *Pater-noster*, (the Lord's prayer,) *creed*, and *ten commandments* in English before they receive the sacrament of the Altar, else they ought not to come to God's board."‡ The reformation had not then, far progressed, from popery, in the English church; but to this day little more is required according to the *liturgy* and *form of confirmation*. It should be remarked, however, that in all the reformed churches there was what they termed the *power of the Keys*; and the *Key of doctrine* and the

* See *Hey* as just cited. † *Stewart's Col.* Book ii. Tit. 4. ‡ *Neal's His. Puri.* 2. a note.

Key of discipline. In the use of the Key of doctrine, they would declare who in God's sight, and according to his word were fit and worthy communicants, and seldom fail to pronounce damnation on those who partook unworthily. But in the exercise of the Key of discipline, they debarred none, but those who in the sight, and judgment of men were grossly scandalous or ignorant, and admitted all upon a *credible profession of their faith in Christ*. And when the baptized children of the church had arrived at somewhere about twelve or fourteen years of age; and could repeat the Lord's Prayer, the Apostle's Creed, the ten commandments, and some little church catechism, they were considered qualified for the participation of the Lord's Supper, and accordingly by the Key of discipline were admitted. Such were the requisitions, and such the practice of the reformed churches, until the rise of the Independents, about the beginning of the seventeenth century. From that period, the views and practice have varied in different churches, respecting the qualifications which are to entitle persons, in the judgment of church officers, to a seat at the Lord's Table. In the days of Richard Baxter, there was much controversy respecting church membership and the terms of admission to the Lord's Supper. He blamed the Episcopaleans for requiring too little, and the Independents for requiring too much. The former pursued the course before stated, the latter required what some call an *expe-*

rience. That is, applicants must give the time, place and manner of their conversion. They must not only profess faith and obedience to the Saviour, but they must profess a hope that they had been changed in heart, and give the particular reasons of that hope.* This Baxter considered tyrannical and erroneous, and one cause of the contentions and divisions in his day. It, in part, laid the axe to the root of church union and communion. Every particular church must, in consistently carrying out this principle, deny communion to all members, from other churches, whose views and practice were different. They must have satisfactory evidence that all who would commune with them were truly regenerated; and for this they could seldom rely upon the judgment and veracity of others. Contention, harsh judging and division must be the consequence. Baxter says, that he examined the question of a persons admission to communion more particularly than any other subject, and he could rest on no other ground than this, “*a credible profession of true faith and repentance.*” And further says, “the Independents bring in tyranny and confusion, whilst they will take no profession as credible, which hath not more to make it credible than God and charity require; and that every man’s

**Savoy Con. Faith. Inst. and order. Isaac Chan-
cey’s Divine Inst. of Cong. Ch. Chap. xii. Baxter’s
Life. Parrt i. p. 113, 143. Appendix No. 4, Page
79.*

word is to be taken, as the credible profession of his own mind, unless he forfeit the credit of his word by gross ignorance of the matter professed, or by a contrary profession or by an inconsistent life." Again, "to exclude any from communion that are baptized, and at age have owned their christianity, and are not proved by sufficient witnesses to have nullified that profession by apostasy, heresy, or a wicked or scandalous life, is church tyranny and injustice, of which all are guilty that do it or desire it."* The Westminster divines held that all who professed the true religion were members of the church, and none such were to be debarred from the Lord's table except those who were ignorant and scandalous.† The church of Scotland says, "Those that are to be admitted to this sacrament must be found to have a competent knowledge of the fundamentals of the christian religion, and to be of such an inoffensive walk and conversation, both towards God and their neighbours that they are not known to be guilty of any scandal that meriteth church censure."‡ I am speaking of the exercise of the key of discipline. The Confession of Faith and Catechisms formed by the Westminster divines, and received by the Church of Scotland, are very full and particular, respecting those graces, dispositions and spiritual exercises required

* *Baxter's Life as before cited.* † *Con. Faith. Chap. xxv. 2. & xxvi. 2. Larger Cat. Ques. 173.* ‡ *Stewart's Collections Tit. 4.*

by the heart searching God, of those who approach him at the Table of the Lord. It appears that the church of Scotland and many others held the middle ground between the Episcopaleans and Independents; but they too generally appear to have considered the *Lord's nurture and admonition*, as consisting in a knowledge of the Lord's prayer—the Apostle's creed, the ten commandments, and the formularies of the church. The Bible was not discarded, or altogether neglected in the religious education of youth, but it gave not the length and breadth, the height, and depth of that education, and was not the *standard* of the religion required for admission to the Table of the Lord. The Bible epitomized, or reduced to brief *forms* and *summaries*, naturally produced a *formal* and *summary* religion. This was lamentably the case in the best of the reformed churches, and in some, the spirit, life and power of the religion of the Bible seldom appear. And when we consider, how prone men are to extreme it is not to be wondered at, that the Independents took the course, so severely censured by the pious and judicious Richard Baxter.

In the last century the discordant views, and practice of the preceding one continued; and much furious controversy prevailed. Infant communion was agitated. A Mr. Pierce and Dr. Dodridge are mentioned among the disputants.* Mr. Charles Buck, who gives a short notice of this con-
Buck's Theo. Dict., Article, Infant communion.

troversy, is of opinion that although infant communion cannot be sustained, yet if children were properly instructed they might commune very young.

It is well known that the Rev. George Whitfield and John Wesley were instrumental in producing a powerful religious excitement through the Kingdom of Great Britain and the United States. Coldness and formality appear to have generally overspread the churches, and a revival of religion was greatly needed. In New England, and in some other places a revival was enjoyed; and one consequence was, that many ran to the extreme of enthusiasm, and others to the most furious opposition. "Old side and new side—Schemers—enthusiasts, new lights," and other not very flattering appellations, tradition informs us, were then in common use. The new side, who advocated the revival were for admitting none to the communion but those who could narrate great experiences, and give satisfactory evidence that they were born again. This the old side termed enthusiasm, and stood firmly for their former terms of communion. viz: a recitation of the Lord's prayer—the apostle's creed and ten commandments, &c. or by a simple, cold profession of faith in the scriptures, and common christianity. The judicious reader will doubtless conclude, that here were two extremes, and that a just medium was necessary to be drawn. This was undertaken by the celebrated Jonathan

Edwards, and may be seen in the first volume of his works. He however declined the discussion of the relation, rights and duties of baptised children. He speaks of their being members of the church in some sort—but not in full and complete standing—he speaks of their becoming adult, and falling short of the qualifications for the Lord's table and yet not cast out of the church, but continuing members in some respect. But: what sort of members they are, or in what respect they are members, he does not attempt to tell.* The qualifications of adults who are to be admitted to the Lord's table, he labours through a large octavo volume; and were he treating merely of adults from the world, applying for admission *into* the church and to her sealing ordinances, no reasonable objection could be urged against his views. One of the forms of profession, with which he says he would be content, although he would not wish to be confined to it, is as follows—"I hope I do truly find a heart to give up myself wholly to God according to the tenor of that

** When my views were known to some of my brethren, they referred me to President Edwards, as one who would give me clear, and correct views, with respect to the qualifications, and characters of all who should be permitted to commune. I confess that I read him with no little interest and profit; but on the subject of baptised children I was unhappily disappointed. He takes them, and the world up together, and thus treats them as he treats aliens and foreigners; and in no sort as members.*

covenant of grace, which was sealed in my baptism; and to walk in a way of that obedience to all the commandments of God, which the covenant of grace, requires, as long as I live.”

Again, “nor do I think it improper for a minister to acquire, and know of the candidate what can be remembered of the circumstances of his christian experience; as this may tend much to illustrate his profession, and give a minister great advantage for proper instructions; though knowledge and remembrance of the time, and method of the first conversion to God, is not to be made a test of a person’s sincerity, nor insisted on as necessary in order to his being received into full charity. Not that I think it at all improper, or unprofitable that, in some special cases, a declaration of the particular circumstances of a persons first conversion and the manner of his convictions, illuminations and comforts should be publicly exhibited before the whole congregation, on occasion of his admission into the church; though this be not demanded as necessary to admission. I ever declared against insisting on a relation of experiences; in this sense, (viz. a relation of the particular time and steps of the operation of the spirit, in first conversion,) and the term of communion: yet if by a relation of experiences, be meant, a declaration of experience of the great things wrought, wherein time, grace, and the essential acts and habits of holiness consists; in this sense

I think an account of a person's experiences necessary in order to full communion in the church."*

You may complain of some obscurity in the distinctions which he makes; but it is evident that he did not make regeneration, or a narrative of experiences, as satisfactory proof of regeneration, the ground of admission to the church and the Lord's Table, by the officers of the church; and at the same time he insists on experimental religion as essential to a true, genuine member of the church, and to eternal life. This he maintains throughout his treatise. And had he disposed of baptized children and shown from the scriptures, what standing, rights and privileges they are entitled to in the church, his book would have been of incalculably more benefit to the citizens of Zion.

President Edwards had opposers, particularly a Mr. Williams, and his own congregation, in Northampton, Massachusetts. In the American churches, farther south, great contentions prevailed. A schism took place among the Presbyterians, and it is said, one party excommunicated the other.† Time and grace healed the breach, but uniformity of views and practice, with respect to the terms of communion, does not yet prevail in the Presbyterian church.

* *Preface to a sermon prefixed to vol. i. of Edward's Works.*

† *For this and some other facts stated I am indebted to some aged people, who recollect the doings of those days, or had them from their parents.*

The *reformed church*, which claims to be the original reformed church from popery, in the united kingdoms of Great Britain and is known more generally under the name of *Covenanters*, declares, through one of her distinguished Doctors, that, “we are not to receive a man to communion merely because he is *regenerate*, nor are we to reject him merely because he is *unregenerate*.” Among other reasons which he assigns, I shall give three.

1. “We are not officers of the *invisible church*. Saintship is, in it, the criterion of membership.

2. “It is *impossible* that regeneration is the criterion of membership in the visible church: no mere man can judge the heart. Upon this principle we never could associate in the church with confidence. We cannot be *certain* of one another’s regeneration.

3. “The principle, that regeneration is the criterion of membership, is pregnant with much mischief. It encourages ignorance in ministers—it is an engine of tyranny—it encourages spiritual pride; it is destructive of piety; the church upon my admission has pronounced me regenerate. I have no need of self examination. It encourages licentiousness. It is a certain method of banishing saints from the church and of receiving hypocrites.” According to this writer, the qualifications for admission into the church, or to any of its privileges are these, the candidate must “knowingly profess a belief of the doctrine of Christ; promise submission to all his institutions; evidence repentance of all

his sins, and manifest no prevailing inclination to any kind of wickedness.*

In the Associate Reformed Church, a writer of high standing, distinguishes between the terms of admitting adults into the church from the world, and the admission of her children to her peculiar privileges. With respect to admitting adult members, he says, "upon the whole we may conclude, that an adult, in order to his right reception into the christian church,

Must be acquainted, with at least the leading doctrines of revelation:

Must be able to give a reason of the hope that is in him," by showing that these doctrines have operated upon his experience:

Must make an open, unequivocal avowal of the Redeemer's name: and,

Must be vigilant in the habitual discharge of his religious and moral duty.

He in whom these things meet, is a christian, and to be recognized as such by the christian church."†

The four following terms of admission are discarded by this writer, and by the church to which he belonged.

1. A general profession of christianity.
2. Soundness in the doctrines of revelation, with-

**Dr. A. McLeod's Ecclesiastical Catechism. Ques. 22. and 26. and Note B.*

†*Christian's Magazine, Vol. i. 278.*

out scrutiny into particular character, or without solicitude on that point.

3. Doctrinal soundness combined with fair morals.

4. Religious experience, and regeneration.

With respect to the children of believers, they are in the church; and the relations and benefits of the covenant, are theirs by hereditary descent, according to this writer. And they are "bound to own their relation to the church of God by professing the name of the Lord Jesus Christ; showing forth his death in the communion of the holy supper, and walking in all his ordinances and commandments blameless."*

I have not the means of ascertaining precisely the terms laid down by other denominations of protestants, for admission into the church; and for the admission of baptized children to the Lord's Table. The Presbyterian church has been as specific as any other in her directory: Chap. ix. After speaking of the manner of admitting baptized children: Sect. i. to the table of the Lord, the mode of admitting unbaptized persons *into the church* is stated, sect. iv. The third section says, that "those who are to be admitted to sealing ordinances shall be examined as to their knowledge and piety." Are we to under-

**Christians Magz.* vol. i. 274-184. Vol. ii. 409-416. *This author's essays on the church of God are worthy the perusal of every theologian.*

stand this as confounding baptized children and the mode of admitting them, expressed in section first, with the unbaptized adults and their admission, section fourth? or does it mean that church officers shall examine all, with respect to their knowledge and piety, so often as they admit them to baptism and the Lord's Supper? This latter is the most natural construction, and coincides with the views expressed by some, viz. that known piety, or as they express it, satisfactory evidence of regeneration, is the ground upon which church officers are to admit to the Lord's Table. Now if this be so, when any, who have by a mere profession of piety, obtained a seat at the Lord's Table, manifest that they have not piety—are not regenerated, they are to be admitted no longer; that is, they are to be virtually excommunicated. I have however found none that thus consistently carry out their own principle. All Presbyterian church sessions fail to cast out from the communion those professors, who merely fail to give satisfactory evidence of their regeneration. They all have to lament that hypocrisy and formality prevail in their congregations; and many will say, "had we the same evidence of such, and such member's hypocrisy; and had we wanted the evidence which we now do, of their being regenerated, when we admitted them to sealing, ordinances we certainly would have refused to do so." But if the section in the *directory* respecting knowledge and piety, be thus understood and ap-

plied by them in admitting to the Lord's Table, why not understand and apply it in the same way, in debarring? If a man is once examined with respect to his piety, and obtains admission to the Lord's Table, must he never be examined again and debarred when no piety is manifested—must he always commune, until guilty of something worse than the want of piety, or regeneration? It is evident there is inconsistency here; and that those who substitute regeneration in the room of piety, as expressed in the *directory* and make this the rule of admission to the Lord's Supper, by the officers of the church, do not carry out their own principle.

If I understand the language of the *directory*, the Presbyterian church, does not differ materially from the two last mentioned churches.

I am yours, &c.



LETTER 9.

Some objections answered, and additional considerations.

DEAR SIR:

MATTERS of fact, and the holy scriptures, to those who admit them to be the word of God—the only infallible rule of faith and practice, ought to be more decisive on any subject than ancient customs or the opinions and practices of men. You must perceive that these have constituted my

chief resort in the preceding investigation. It has been my aim to ascertain facts, and what saith the law and the testimony? Certain topics were thus introduced, which furnish strong arguments in support of the position taken, but which according to my plan could only be noticed in a cursory manner. To obviate objections and to leave no ground for evasion, it is necessary to resume some of these topics.

It was taken for granted, that the Lord's Supper has come in the room of the passover, or that one is a continuation of the other, with some alteration, with respect to the bloody symbols. It was not supposed that this would be denied by any Pædobaptist or Presbyterian. In this I have been mistaken. It has been boldly asserted that the Lord's Supper has not come in the room of the passover—and that therefore the law of the one does not regulate the other. So say our baptist brethren with respect to circumcision and baptism and certainly with much more apparent reason. Yet my Presbyterian brethren reject both their assertion and their reason. They are also at issue with their own Confession of Faith, with Calvin, Witsius, and other of their favourite fathers—and what is more with the word of God.

What says the Confession of Faith on this subject; "the Sacraments of the Old Testament in regard of the spiritual things thereby signified and

exhibited, were for substance the same with those of the new.*

In support of this declaration, the following texts are found in the margin, and those who put them there, understood them as containing something like proof: "Moreover brethren, I would not that ye should be ignorant, how, that all our fathers were under the cloud, and all passed through the sea and were all baptized unto Moses in the cloud and in the sea, and did all eat the same spiritual meat, and did all drink the same spiritual drink, (for they drank of that spiritual rock that followed them, and that rock was christ.)"† "Purge out, therefore, the old leaven that ye may be a new lump, as ye are unleavened. For even Christ, our passover is sacrificed for us. Therefore, let us keep the feast, not with old leaven, neither with the leaven of malice and wickedness, but with the unleavened bread of sincerity and truth."‡ But our saviour at the time of instituting his New Testament supper, appears to decide this question beyond all cavil.

It has already been observed that the table of the Lord, in the celebration of the last passover, was the table of the Lord, in the first celebration of his New Testament supper. It was not even drawn and spread again. The body and blood of the paschal lamb, were not again presented; but the bread and wine were—and for what purpose?

**Chap. xxvii. Sec. v.* †*1 Cor. x. 1. 2. 3. 4.* ‡*1 Cor. v. 7. 8.*

Why, says the Saviour, you have just had the blood of the Old Testament sprinkled: you have made use of the body of the lamb, and of the bread and wine; all these belonged to the Old Testament. I now give you the same bread as significant of my body, and henceforward, it stands in the room of the body of the paschal lamb. I give you the same cup of the passover—but now it is the cup of the *New*, not of the Old Testament significant of my blood shed for the remission of sins. How would the disciples of our Saviour understand him? Or what was his language calculated to teach them? That his table and the passover were swept away? That nothing of the same nature and uses and for the same kind of characters could be found, but an entirely new ordinance, new table, new regulations, new symbols and new communicating subjects. Certainly not. Examine the evangelists once more on this subject. How readest thou? With respect to the passover and Lord's supper, I read thus: "And he said unto them, with desire I have desired to eat this passover with you before I suffer; for I say unto you, I will not any more eat thereof, until (the meaning of) it be fulfilled (by my death) in the Kingdom of God (the Gospel dispensation.)" "And he took the cup, (probably the third cup which the Jews used in the passover,) and gave thanks, (as they usually did,) and said, take this and divide it among yourselves, for I say unto you, I will not drink of the fruit of the vine, until the Kingdom of

God (the Gospel church or dispensation) shall come.”

So much he spake concerning the elements of the passover before he exhibited the new form of the same ordinance as suited to the Gospel dispensation; then he proceeds with his New Testament passover, in these words “and he took bread” certainly some of the unleavened bread just used in the passover, and gave thanks and brake it, and gave unto them saying: this is (a symbolical representation of) my body “which is (about to be) given for you. This do in remembrance of me. Likewise also the cup after supper, (being the fourth cup of the passover, according to Jewish usage,) saying, this cup is the New Testament in my blood, which is (about to be) shed for you.” Luke xxii. 15–20. Mark xiv. 25.

On these passages I remark—

1. That, by the kingdom of God, here mentioned, we *must* understand the reign of Christ, in his church, after his resurrection, here on earth. For the passover is not to be fulfilled, and the fruit of the vine to be used in Heaven.

2. When the Kingdom of God was come, then the passover, as far as typical, should be fulfilled, but the cup, the fruit of the vine, should be drank by our Saviour; that is, the same symbol should be used by him and his disciples, in the passover. He would drink it *new* in the Kingdom. How new? Why, with respect to the new dispensation or tes-

tament. This cup is the new testament in my blood. The cup is not a new symbolical cup, but it is to be drank new. The table of the lord is not to be a new table, nor the symbols spread on it new symbols, but two of the old symbols are to be used as the symbols of the New Testament. But by whom? Are any who partook of them formerly, now to be debarred? Let this be shewn.

If my brethren will still insist that the Lord's Supper is neither a continuation of, nor a substitute for the passover, but that it is a new ordinance, governed by new laws, and little children are to be excluded for want of express authority, admitting them, in the New Testament, they must carry the exclusion still farther and exclude all females. For I may venture to challenge the production of either precept or example, of female communion in the New Testament. I may be told that the precept in 1 Cor. xi. 28: "Let a man examine himself and so let him eat," embraces women—that the word *anthropos* in the original, translated man, is common gender, and includes both male and female, or mankind, and of course women are included and commanded to partake. If the right of women to commune rests on this precept, it is a slender thread. It may be granted that *anthropos* man, is frequently used including both sexes, but it is also frequently used to designate man as opposed to, and excluding woman, as the following passages will prove:

Mat. xix. 3. "Is it lawful for a man, (anthropos) to put away his wife for every cause?" v. 5. "For this cause shall a man (anthropos) leave father and mother and cleave to his wife:" v. 10. "If the case of a man (anthropos) be so with his wife, it is not good to marry." Here are three instances where the word anthropos is used to exclude women. But lest it should be said that the gospel by Matthew is a translation from Hebrew to Greek, and, therefore, not as accurate in language as other books—I will cite you to a passage from the apostle Paul himself, in this same epistle to the Corinthians. In the first verse of the 7th chapter, he says, "now concerning the things whereof ye wrote unto me, it is good for a man (anthropos) not to touch a woman." Now sir, I ask, is it safe to rest the right of females to admission to the Lord's Table, on the meaning of a word which at best is equivocal, and used by the same apostle and at least one other New Testament writer to exclude woman from the meaning. The precept relied on, therefore, fails, and does not necessarily include women, and there is no example expressly in point, and the demand may be made of my opponents, to produce their warrant for such a practice. Now nothing is more easy on the old and well matured doctrine that the Lord's Supper has succeeded the passover and is governed by the same law. Instances enough can be produced by way of example, as well as precept sufficiently plain, proving that women are entitled to

admission to the Lord's Table, and the right of children rests on the same base, and it is not consistent to admit one, by the law of the passover and yet exclude the other, when the law is equally plain, with respect to both.

One consideration more.—

The passover was a distinguishing, significant, and commemorating ordinance. Are not these the great objects of the Lord's Supper? Did not the people of God hold communion with him at his table in the passover through the symbols of Christ's sacrifice, and do not his people hold communion with him at his table in the Lord's Supper, through the symbols of the same sacrifice? You must perceive Sir, that the cause which requires its advocates to deny that the Lord's supper has come in the room of the passover, or is substantially a continuation of it, is a cause that needs new measures and a very daring spirit. A remark was made in a former letter, and a promise given to make it good, that to debar church members from the Lord's Supper, involves the question of their membership, and is a virtual excommunication of them. In support of this position the following proof is submitted:

Much importance is attached in the holy scriptures to religious and Church VISIBILITY. Our Saviour has clearly taught us that we must confess him before men, if we would be his followers. We must come out and be separate, or he will not re-

ceive us. If we are ashamed of him before men, he will be ashamed of us before his Father.

One great object of the sealing ordinances, both under the Old and New Testament is to give visibility to the church and her members. This was one important use of all the religious rites and ceremonies given to the Israelites. Every day a visible difference was made in some form or other between the clean and unclean; between those who were members of the congregation of the Lord and those who were not. Circumcision and all the sacrifices, including the passover drew a visible line between the holy and the unholy. There was then no visible mingling of these two classes together in religious rites. Was it an object or a necessary consequence of the abrogation of that system and the removal of the partition wall, that the people of the Lord became amalgamated with the ungodly world, and no visible line of demarcation between the Kingdom of Christ and the Kingdom of Satan was left? If so, the church instead of becoming more gloriously visible by the appearance of Messiah, has lost her visibility altogether, as an organized distinct society. As she now is, it is obvious she is merged in the world. A sort of dovetailing connexion exists, and in none of her ordinances does she stand out a distinct visible body. In her sacramental solemnities, we may see a few, and oftentimes comparatively few, communicants surrounded by a great number of children and youth, which

by the language of her confessions, and the once repeated rite of baptism, are declared to be members; by some a partial or particular kind of members, and in common practice, all nondescripts mingled and blended with the world, assigned practically by the church to Satan's Kingdom, but formally admitted to be members. It is immaterial how moral or even pious they may be, they still are classed with the world; or however immoral and disorderly they are, still they are not excommunicated, and are classed with the church. Thus the line of demarcation between the church and the world, cannot be perceived by human eyes. This state of things did not exist in the apostle's days, nor ought it to exist now. When the daily sacrifice was taken away; when the ceremonial distinction of meats and drinks; of clean and unclean ceased, how was the church of God still made a separate, visible, distinct body? Not by baptism. For this being but once administered and leaving no visible mark on the body, did not distinguish from the world those who enjoyed it. Preaching of the Gospel, public prayer and praise are not now distinguishing ordinances. The two latter were used as such by the early christian church. We, however, consider none distinguishing and sealing ordinances, but baptism and the Lord's Supper. And as baptism does at no one time exhibit visibly the Church of Christ in any place, the whole business of giving visibility to the church which was ac-

complished by all the sacrifices and religious rites under the law, devolves upon the single ordinance of the Lord's Supper. This accounts for the weekly and even daily celebration of that ordinance by the apostles and the Christian Church, until the third or fourth century.

The sacrifice of Christ is exhibited in this ordinance, and therefore it stands not only in the room of the passover sacrifice, but of all the sacrifices which prefigured Christ and drew the separating line of visibility between the people of God and the people of the world. This to my mind is a satisfactory reason for the Lord's Supper being *daily* celebrated; whereas the passover was celebrated but once a year. Believers were added to the church daily by baptism, but how were they to be daily exhibited as one visible body with all its accessions? Not at all, unless by the Lord's Supper—the New Testament passover, from which all but the church members were excluded. The walls of the house as we have already seen formed the separating line. The visible members of Christ's kingdom were within, and the visible members of Satan's kingdom were without, every time this distinguishing ordinance was administered. Resort might be had to the records and registry of the church, if any were kept to ascertain whether a person were baptized, and in good legal standing, yet the records and registry did not habitually and visibly exhibit the church and the world as two separate bodies, be-

cause the registry is a mere measure of convenience kept for evidence to the church itself. Indeed I might have assumed, without attempting to prove, that the Lord's Supper is a distinguishing ordinance. This idea is advanced in the Confession of Faith as one of the doctrines of the church. It is there said that one of the uses of a sacrament is "to put a visible difference between *those that belong* unto the church and the rest of the world;" and that while it is used to testify and cherish love and communion between church members, it is also used to distinguish them from those that are without.* But without resorting to any human authority, I conceive that any one who will allow himself candidly to read the tenth chapter of first Corinthians, in which the apostle shews the analogy or rather identity between the Jewish and Christian Church, and in the signification of the ordinances of the church in every age, and also argues from the ordinances the unity and community of the church as opposed to the world, and makes mention of the ordinance of the supper as the distinguishing rite of the church, and then concludes "you cannot drink of the cup of the Lord, and the cup of devils; ye cannot be partakers of the table of the lord and the table of devils." I say, suppose no one who will candidly read this chapter and understand it, would require any other proof, that the Lord's Supper is

**Con. F. Chap. xxvii. Sec. I. Large Cat. Quest. 162.*

the distinguishing ordinance which draws the line between the church and world. I do not exclude the idea of the church shining in the holy lives of her members and thus becoming visible; but I speak of her and her members as constituting an organized and visible body, separate from the world by acts cognizable by the senses of every one; and in this sense, I trust Sir, you will agree, that according to the scriptures the ground of visible membership is narrowed to the single ordinance of the Lord's Supper. Therefore, if you debar any church members from that ordinance that are able to come and partake of it in an orderly manner, you unchurch them; you declare before the world that they are not members, by throwing them out with the world. But baptized children of three years of age, or of any age when infancy ends with the Lord's nurture and admonition, their covenant birthright, are capable of coming and partaking of that ordinance in an orderly manner; Therefore, when they are debarred they are unchurched, they are declared to be no church members. You may say that this position and reasoning will prove too much, as it will prove that all suspended members and all who are not in good standing are unchurched and have lost their membership. I reply that in all such cases there is implied a forfeiture of membership, and for the time being it is taken from them, with the understanding that they are not to enjoy it again without repentance. Suspension is

temporary excommunication, and excommunication is a cutting off from the church and her distinguishing privileges. A member who is not in good standing in the church, is supposed to be under charges and a process of trial, and if that terminates according to the word of God, he is either in good standing, or has no standing at all, in the church. But how will the objection apply to little children who are neither suspended nor are under process before the church? They *are* members, and members in good standing until charges are brought, and sentence of condemnation passed. Separate them from their parents at the Lord's Table, and throw them among the people of the world, and you unchurch them, without a charge or a hearing. This Sir, is a high-handed doing, which certainly requires the high authority of Heaven for its justification.

We have seen from evidence satisfactory, that little ones were of old, in the church of God. Infants were circumcised, and little ones ate the passover. If they were once *in*, we ask for the authority which puts them *out* of the church. Our Saviour frequently reprov'd the Jews for their alterations and additions to the law of God by their traditions. That little ones ate the passover in his day, as matter of history cannot be questioned; yet he never reprov'd the Jews for this as corruption, though year after year he attended the feast of the passover, both before and after his public ministry

commenced, and yet he never once intimated to the jews that they were profaning the passover, by the admission of little ones. We must from his silence draw one or two conclusions, either that this practice had his approbation, or that knowing it to be a profanation of the ordinance, he so far failed in his duty as never to caution his nation against the horrid deed. The latter is wholly inadmissible; the former must, therefore, be taken. He did not feel so much shocked as some of our moderns do at the thought that a little one should touch the august symbols of the Saviour's body and blood; and these same persons can without any concern or alarm behold the symbol of the Holy Ghost, that august person in the adorable Trinity, against whom blasphemy committed shall never be forgiven, administered to unconscious infants who cannot have the least idea of the ordinances. To be consistent, it is conceived they ought to shudder as much at one administration as the other.

We have seen that our Saviour was not only silent with regard to excluding children from the passover, but that he clearly and explicitly admitted little children to be members of his kingdom, and spoke of their receiving his kingdom, and of his officers receiving them into his kingdom. We may also go farther and see that he administered his supper for the first time to persons who, it is conceived could not pass the ordeal which moderns have created for baptized members, and gain at this

day admission to the same supper. A little examination into the history of the twelve apostles will prove beyond a question, that they had made but poor progress in christian knowledge, and were very ignorant of the nature of that Kingdom into which they had entered, till after the ascension of Jesus, notwithstanding their teacher taught and spake as never man spake. He had told them that he should be betrayed, that he should be slain, that he should rise on the third day. Peter took offence at this and told his master that this should not be done, and thus drew from our lord the appellation of Satan applied to Peter both for his ignorance and his rashness. How often did they enter into the controversy among themselves, who should be greatest in that temporal kingdom, which they believed our Saviour was about to erect, and in which they conceived they were to have honors and offices? Indeed St. Luke tells us in his 22d Chap. and 22 verse, that even on the very evening of the Lord's Supper, and immediately after its celebration, they stirred this controversy even to strife, and then wanted the question settled, who was entitled to the greatest share of temporal honors. On that same night, although so much had been said and done by the Saviour, to fit them for the crucifixion; and after he had exhibited to them the symbols of his broken body and shed blood, they all forsook him and fled, not being able to see how the great temporal redeemer of Israel, which they believed

him to be, could be crucified; nor were they willing to risk themselves, for a supposed malefactor, when they expected an earthly deliverer. What is still more, the three appointed days rolled round; the mighty Conqueror arose from the tomb as he had predicted, and as he had assured these apostles, yet the report of his resurrection was to them as idle tales, and two of them on their way to Emmaus, wondered what these things could mean, and trusted that it was he that should redeem Israel, which they did not then suppose possible. They were in astonishment, occasioned by their own ignorance and inattention, so much so that our Lord himself, who had administered his supper to them so lately, now pronounced them "fools and slow of heart to believe." Never indeed till the descent of the spirit did they understand this great mystery or comprehend what was the reign of which Jesus spoke notwithstanding they were church members in full communion, admitted by our lord himself, and that at the administration of the ordinance, which he designed as a model for future generations. Now Sir, I ask you, how would such applicants now fare, if they were to present themselves at the door of many churches? Would it not be accounted a profanation of the ordinance to administer it to such ignorant believers? But I still enquire, and entreat a candid answer, how would such communicants appear when examined beside the little children after they have had the Lord's

nurture and admonition in the present day? I ask seriously whether these little members could not give a better account of the nature of the Lord's Kingdom, and of the nature of the feast which they were about to celebrate, than the twelve apostles could have done, on the night of its first celebration? I will venture to affirm that such young disciples could more clearly discern the Lord's body in the sense contemplated by Paul, as exhibited in the feast than the twelve could on that fatal night, and for many days and nights afterwards. It certainly becomes us to be more humble learners from the acts and precepts of the Saviour. If he administered his ordinance to those who were ignorant and only sincere, why ought we to be so afraid of profanation. If he has placed infants and little ones in his church either under the new or old dispensation, we ought not virtually or practically to exclude them, without a "thus saith the lord," and we ought not to become so zealous of the holiness of his ordinances, as to fear profanation and abuse, by excluding his little ones, which he has admitted, for fear of their ignorance and irreverence, especially as the apostles themselves were not more wise in understanding the nature of the ordinance, when they first partook, than our little ones may be, if rightly taught at the most early age claimed as proper for admission.

I have now Sir, given you an outline of the arguments by which I support the rights of baptized

little ones, to the sealing ordinance of the Lord's Supper, and maintain the right of cutting off those who will not partake. They are not as full as might be, and ill health has prevented their completion in the manner intended. I ask for them a candid and fair hearing, and if they are opposed and I shall not be convinced that I am in an error, I trust that I shall be able, if spared, to corroborate and sustain any that I have advanced.

Yours, respectfully.

THE END.

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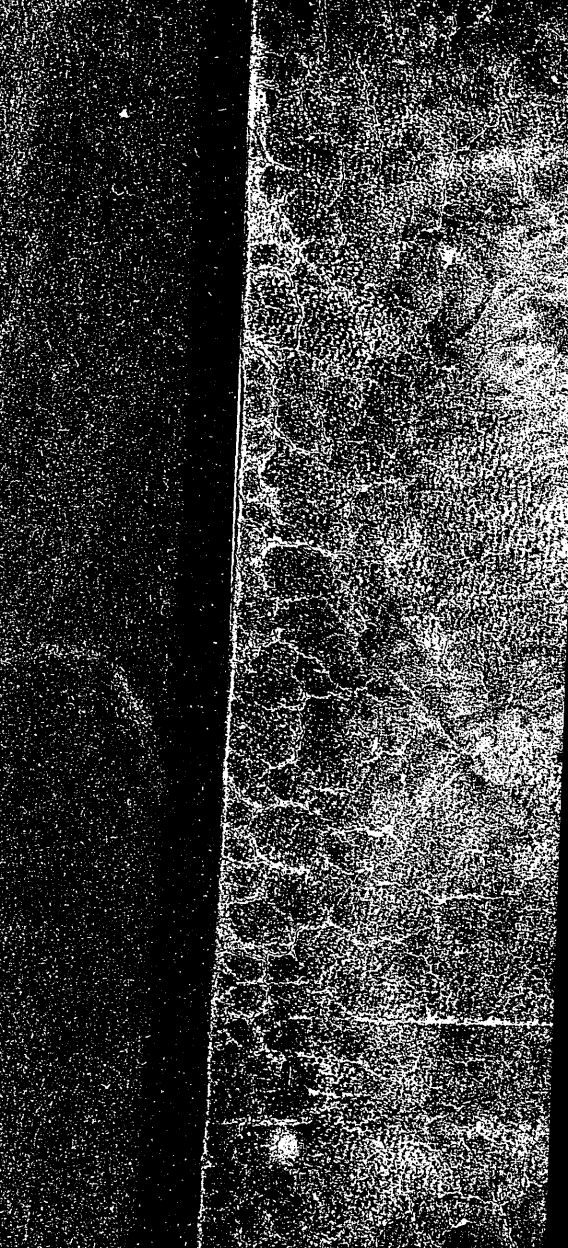
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